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JACK THE GIANT-KILLER

BY

MISS THACKERAY,

AUTHOR OF "BEAUTY AND THE BEAST," "LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD," "CINDERELLA"
"THE SLEEPING BEAUTY IN THE WOOD," ETC.

LORING, Publisher,
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JACK THE GIANT-KILLER.

CHAPTER I.

ON MONSTERS, ETC.

Most of us have read at one time or another in our lives the article entitled *Gigantes*, which is to be found in a certain well-known dictionary. It tells of that terrible warfare in which gods and giants, fighting in fury, hurled burning woods and rocks through the air, piled mountains upon mountains, brought seas from their boundaries, thundering, to overwhelm their adversaries; — it tells how the gods fled in their terror into Egypt, and hid themselves in the shapes of animals, until Hercules, the giant-killer of those strange times, sprang up to rescue and deliver the world from the dire storm and confusion into which it had fallen. Hercules laid about him with his club. Others since then, our Jack among the rest, have fought with gallant courage and devotion, and given their might and their strength and their lives to the battle, — that battle which has no end, alas! and which rages from sunrise to sundown, — although hero after hero comes forward, full of hope, of courage, of divine fire and indignation.

Who shall gainsay us, if nowadays some of us may perhaps be tempted to think that the tides of victory flow, not with the heroes, but with the giants; that the gods of our own land are hiding in strange disguises; that the heroes battling against such unequal odds are weary and sad at heart; while the giants, unconquered still, go roaming about the country, oppressing the poor, devouring the children, laying homes bare and desolate?

Here is *The Times*, of May, 1867, full of a strange medley and record of the things which are in the world together—Jacks and giants, and champion-belts and testimonials; kings and queens, knights and castles, and ladies, screams of horror, and shouts of laughter, and of encouragement or

anger. Feelings and prejudices and events, — all vibrating, urging, retarding, influencing one another.

And we read that some emperors are feasting in company at their splendid revels, while another is torn from his throne and carried away by a furious and angry foe, by a giant of the race which has filled the world with such terror in its time. Of late a young giant of that very tribe has marched through our own streets; a giant at play, it is true, and feeding his morbid appetite with purses, chains, and watches, and iron park railings; but who shall say that he may not perhaps grow impatient as time goes on, and cry for other food?

And meanwhile people are lying dying in hospitals, victims of one or more of the cruel monsters whose ill deeds we all have witnessed. In St. Bartholomew's wards, for instance, are recorded twenty-three cases of victims dying from what doctors call *delirium tremens*. Which Jack is there among us strong enough to overcome the giant with his cruel, fierce fangs, and force him to abandon his prey? Here is the history of two men suffocated in a vat at Bristol by the deadly gas from spent hops. One of them, Ambrose, is hurrying to the other one's help, and gives up his life for his companion. It seems hard that such men should be sent unarmed into the clutch of such pitiable monsters as this; and one grudges these two lives, and the tears of the widows and children. I might go on for many pages fitting the parable to the commonest facts of life. The great parochial Blunderbore still holds his own: some of his castles have been seized, but others are impregnable; — their doors are kept closed, their secrets are undiscovered.

Other giants, of the race of Cormoran, that "dwell in gloomy caverns, and wade over to the main-land to steal cattle," are at this instant beginning to creep from their foul dens, by sewers and stagnant waters, spreading death and dismay along their

path. In the autumn their raids are widest and most deadly. Last spring I heard two women telling one another of a giant of the tribe of Cormoran camping down at Dorking in Surrey: a giant with a poisoned breath and hungry jaws, attacking not only cattle, but the harmless country people all about; children, and men, and women, whom he seized with his deadly gripe, and choked and devoured. Giant Blunderbore, it must be confessed, has had many a hard blow dealt him of late from one Jack and another. There is one gallant giant-killer at Fulham hard by, waging war with many monsters, the great blind giant Ignorance among the rest. Some valiant women, too, there are who have armed themselves, and gone forth with weak hands and tender, strong hearts to do their best. I have seen some lately who are living in the very midst of the dreary labyrinth where one of the great Minotaurs of the city is lurking. They stand at the dark mouth of the poisonous caverns, warning and entreating those who, in their blindness and infatuation, are rushing thither, to beware. "I took a house and came," said one of them simply to my friend Mrs. K——, when she asked her how it happened that she was established there in the black heart of the city. All round her feet a little ragged tribe were squatting on the floor, and chirping, and spelling, and learning a lesson, which, pray Heaven, will last them their lives; and across the road, with pretty little crumpled mob-caps all awry on their brown heads, other children were sewing and at work under the quiet rule of their good teachers. The great business of the city was going on outside. The swarming docks were piled with bales and crowded with workmen; the main thoroughfares streaming and teeming with a struggling life; the side streets silent, deserted, and strangely still. A bleak north-east wind was blowing down some of these gray streets. I have a vision before me now of one of them: a black deserted alley or passage, hung with some of those rags that seem to be like the banners of this reign of sorrow and sin. The wind swooped up over the stones, the rags waved and fell, and a colorless figure passing up the middle of the dirty gutter pulled at its grimy shawl, and crouched as it slid along.

We may well say, we Londoners, see how far the east is from the west! I myself, coming home at night to the crowded, cheerful station, and travelling back to the light of love, of warmth, of comfort, find myself

dimly wondering whether those are not indeed our sins out yonder set away from us, in that dreary East of London district; our sins alive and standing along the roadside in rags and crying out to us as we pass.

Here in our country cottage the long summer is coming to an end, in falling leaves and setting suns, and gold and russet, where green shoots were twinkling a little time ago. The banks of the river have shifted their colors, and the water, too, has changed. The song of the birds is over; but there are great flights in the air, rapid, mysterious. For weeks past we have been living in a gracious glamour and dazzle of light and warmth; and now, as we see it go, H. and I make plans, not unwillingly, for a winter to be passed between the comfortable walls of our winter home. The children, hearing our talk, begin to prattle of the treasures they will find in the nursery at London, as they call it. Dolly's head, which was unfortunately forgotten when we came away, and the panniers off the wooden donkey's back, and little neighbor Joan, who will come to tea again in the doll's tea-things. Yesterday, when I came home from the railway-station across the bridge, little Anne, who had never in her short life seen the lamps of the distant town alight, came toddling up, chattering about "de pooty tandles," and pulling my dress to make me turn and see them too.

To-night other lights have been blazing. The west has been shining along the hills with a gorgeous autumnal fire. From our terrace we have watched the lights and the mists as they succeed one another, streaming mysteriously before yonder great high altar. It has been blazing as if for a solemn ceremonial and burnt sacrifice. As we watch it, other people look on in the fields, on the hills, and from the windows of the town. Evening incense rises from the valley, and mounts up through the stillness. The waters catch the light, and repeat it; the illumination falls upon us, too, as we look and see how high the heavens are in comparison with the earth; and suddenly, as we are waiting still, and looking and admiring, it is over,—the glory has changed into peaceful twilight.

And so we come away, closing shutters, and doors, and curtains, and settling down to our common occupations and thoughts again; but outside another high service is beginning, and the lights of the great northern altar are burning faintly in their turn.

People say that extremes meet; and in the same way that fancy worlds and dreams do not seem meant for the dreary stone streets and smoky highways of life, neither do they belong to summer and holiday time, when reality is so vivid, so sweet, and so near, that it is but a waste to dream of fairies dancing in rings, or peeping from the woods, when the singing and shining is in all the air, and the living, sunshiny children are running on the lawn, and pulling at the flowers with their determined little fingers. And there are butterflies and cuckoos and flowing streams and the sounds of flocks and the vibrations of summer everywhere. Little Aune comes trotting up with a rose-head tight-crushed in her hand; little Margery has got a fern-leaf stuck into her hat; Puck, Peas-blossom, Cobweb, Moth, Mustard-seed, themselves, are all invisible in this great day-shue. The gracious fancy kingdom vanishes at cock-crow, we know. It is not among realities so wonderful and beautiful that we can scarce realize them that we must look for it. Its greatest triumphs are where no other light shines to brighten,—by weary sick-beds; when distance and loneliness oppress. Who cannot remember days and hours when a foolish conceit has come now and again, like a "flower growing on the edge of a precipice," to distract the dizzy thoughts from the dark depths below?

Certainly it was through no fancy world that poor John Trevithic's path led him wandering in life, but amid realities so stern and so pitiful at times that even his courage failed him now and then. He was no celebrated hero, though I have ventured to christen him after the great type of our childhood; he was an honest, outspoken young fellow, with a stubborn temper and a tender heart, impressionable to outer things, although from within it was not often that anything seemed to affect his even moods and cheerful temper. He was a bright-faced, broad-set young fellow, about six-and-twenty, with thick, light hair, and eagleish eyes, and lips and white teeth like a girl. His hands were like himself, broad and strong, with wide, competent fingers, that could fight and hold fast, if need be; and yet they were so clever and gentle withal, that children felt safe in his grasp and did not think of crying, and people in trouble would clutch at them when he put them out. Perhaps Jack did not always understand the extent of the griefs for which his cheerful sympathy was better medicine after all than

any mere morbid investigations into their depths could have proved.

CHAPTER II.

CORMORAN.

THE first time I ever heard of the Rev. John Trevithic was at Sandea one morning, when my maid brought in two cards, upon which were inscribed the respective names of Miss Moineaux and Miss Triquett. I had taken a small, furnished house at the sea-side (for H. was ailing in those days, and had been ordered salt air by the doctors); we knew nobody and nothing of the people of the place, so that I was at first a little bewildered by the visit; but I gathered from a few indescribable indications that the small, fluttering lady who came in sideways was Miss Moineaux, and the bony, curly, scanty personage with the big hook-nose who accompanied her Miss Triquett. They both sat down very politely, as people do who are utter strangers to you and about to ask you for money. Miss Moineaux fixed a little pair of clear, meek, imploring eyes upon me. Miss Triquett took in the apartment with a quick, uncomfortable swoop or ball-like glance. Then she closed her eyes for an instant as she cleared her throat.

She need not have been at any great pains in her investigations; the story told itself. Two middle-aged women with their desks and work-baskets open before them, and *The Times* and some Indian letters just come in, on the table, the lodging-house mats, screens, Windsor chairs, and druggets, a fire burning for H.'s benefit, an open window for mine, the pleasant morning wash and rush of the sea against the terrace upon which the windows opened, and the voices of H.'s grandchildren playing outside. I can see all the cheerful glitter now, as I write. I loved the little place that strikes me so quaintly and kindly as I think of it. The sun shone all the time we were there; day by day I saw health and strength coming into my H.'s pale face. The house was comfortable, the walks were pleasant, good news came to us of those we loved. In short, I was happy there, and one cannot always give a reason for being happy. In the mean time, Miss Triquett had made her observations with her wandering ball eyes.

"We called," she said, in a melancholy,

clerical voice, "thinking that you ladies might possibly be glad to avail yourselves of an opportunity for subscribing to a testimonial which we are about to present to our friend and pastor, the Reverend John Trevithic, M. A., and for which my friend, Miss Moineaux and myself are fully prepared to receive subscriptions. You are perhaps not aware that we lose him on Tuesday week?"

"No, indeed," said I, and I am afraid my cap-strings began to rustle, as they have a way of doing when I am annoyed.

"I'm sure I'm afraid you must think it a great liberty of us to call," burst in little Miss Moineaux, flurriedly, in short, disconnected sentences. "I trust you will pardon us. They say it is quite certain he is going. We have had a suspicion — perhaps . . ." Poor Miss Moineaux stopped short, and turned very red, for Triquett's eye was upon her. She continued, falteringly, "Miss Triquett kindly suggested collecting a teapot and strainer, if possible; it depends, of course, upon friends and admirers. You know how one longs to show one's gratitude; and I'm sure in our hopeless state of apathy we had so neglected the commonest precautions —"

Here Miss Triquett interposed. "The authorities were greatly to blame. Mr. Trevithic did his part, no more; but it is peculiarly as a pastor and teacher that we shall miss him. It is a pity that you have not been aware of his ministry." (A roll of the eyes.) A little rustle and chirrup from Miss Moineaux.

"If the ladies had only heard him last Sunday afternoon,—no, I mean the morning before."

"The evening appeal was still more impressive," said Miss Triquett. "I am looking forward anxiously to his farewell, next Sunday."

It was really too bad. Were these two strange women who had come to take forcible possession of our morning-room, about to discuss at any length, the various merits of Mr. Trevithic's last sermon but two, but three, next but one, taking up my time, my room, asking for my money? I was fairly out of temper when, to my horror, H., in her flute voice from the sofa, where she had been lying under her soft, silk quilt, said,—

"Mary, will you give these ladies a sovereign for me, towards the teapot? Mr. Trevithic was at school with my Frank, and

this is not, I think, the first sovereign he has had from me."

Miss Triquett's eyes roved over to the sofa. It must have seemed almost sacrilege to her to speak of Mr. Trevithic as a school-boy, or even to have known him in jackets. "It is as a tribute to the pastor that these subscriptions are collected," said she, with some dignity, "not on any lower—"

But it was too late, for little Miss Moineaux had already sprang forward with a grateful, "Oh, thank you!" and clasped H.'s thin hand.

And so at last we got rid of the poor little women. They fluttered off with their prize, their thin silk dresses catching the wind as they skimmed along the sands, their little faded mantles and veils and curls and petticoats flapping feebly after them, their poor, little, well-worn feet padding off in search of fresh tribute to Trevithic.

"I declare they were both in love with him, ridiculous old gooses," said I. "How could you give them that sovereign?"

"He was a delightful boy," said H. (She melts to all school-boys still, though her own are grown men and out in the world.) "I used to be very angry with him; he and Frank were always getting into scrapes together," said H., with a smiling sigh, for Major Frank was on his way home from India, and the poor mother could trust herself to speak of him in her happiness. "I hope it is the right man," H. went on, laughing. "You must go and hear the farewell oration, Mary, and tell me how many of these little ladies are carried out of church."

They behaved like heroines. They never faltered nor fainted, they gave no outward sign (except, indeed, a stifled sob here and there). I think the prospect of the teapot buoyed them up; for after the service two or three of them assembled in the churchyard, and eagerly discussed some measure of extreme emphasis. They were joined by the gentleman who had held the plate at the door, and then their voices died away into whispers, as the rector and Mr. Trevithic himself came out of the little side door, where Miss Bellingham, the rector's daughter, had been standing waiting. The rector was a smug old gentleman, in a nice Sunday tie. He gave his arm to his daughter, and trotted along, saying, "How do? how do?" to the various personages he passed.

The curate followed, — a straight and active young fellow, with a bright face, a

face that looked right and left as he came along. He didn't seem embarrassed by the notice he excited. The four little girls from Coote Court—so somebody called them—rushed forward to meet him, saying, "Good-by, dear Mr. Trevithic, good-by." Mrs. Myles herself, sliding off to her pony carriage, carrying her satin train all over her arms, stopped to smile, and to put out a slender hand, letting the satin stuff fall into the dust. Young Lord and Lady Wargrave were hurrying away with their various guests, but they turned and came back to say a friendly word to this popular young curate; and Colonel Hambledon, Lord Wargrave's brother, gave him a friendly nod, and said, "I shall look in one day before you go." I happened to know the names of all these people, because I had sat in Mrs. Myles's pew at church, and I had seen the War-graves in London.

The subscribers to the teapot were invited to visit it at Mr. Phillips's, in Cockspur Street, to whom the design had been entrusted. It was a very handsome teapot, as ugly as other teapots of the florid order; and the chief peculiarity was that a snake grasped by a clenched hand formed the handle, and a figure with bandages on its head was sitting on the melon on the lid. This was intended to represent an invalid recovering from illness. Upon one side was the following inscription: —

TO
THE REV. JOHN TREVITHIC, M. A.,
FROM HIS PARISHIONERS AT SANDSEA,
IN GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE OF
HIS EXERTIONS
DURING THE CHOLERA SEASON OF 18—,
AND HIS SUCCESSFUL AND
ENTERPRISING EFFORTS FOR THE IMPROVED
DRAINAGE OF HIGH STREET AND THE
NEIGHBORING ALLEYS,
ESPECIALLY
THOSE KNOWN
AS "ST. MICHAEL'S BUILDINGS."

Upon the other,

TO THE REV. JOHN TREVITHIC, M. A.

Both these inscriptions were composed by Major Coote, of Coote Court, a J. P. for the county. Several other magistrates had subscribed, and the presentation paper was signed by most of the ladies of the town. I recognized the bold autograph of Louisa Triquett, and the lady-like quill of Sarah

Moineaux, among the rest. H. figured as "Anon." down at the bottom.

Jack had honestly earned his teapot, the pride of his mother's old heart. He had worked hard during that unfortunate outbreak of cholera; and when the summer came round again, the young man had written quires, ridden miles, talked himself hoarse, about this negleeted sewer in St. Michael's Buildings. The town council, finding that the whole of High Street would have to be taken up, and what a very serious undertaking it was likely to be, were anxious to compromise matters; and they might have succeeded in doing so, if it had not been for the young man's determination. Old Mr. Bellingham, who had survived some seventy cholera seasons, was not likely to be very active in the matter. Everybody was away, as it happened, at that time, except Major Coote, who was easily talked over by anybody; Jobsen, the mayor, had got hold of him, and Trevithic had to fight the battle alone. One person sympathized with him from the beginning, and talked to her father, and insisted, very persistently, that he should see the necessity of the measure. This was Anne Bellingham, who, with her soft pink eyes fixed on Trevithic's face, listened to every word he said with interest,—an interest which quite touched and gratified the young man, breathless and weary of persuading fishmongers, of trying to influence the sleek, obstinate butcher, and the careworn baker, with his ten dusty children, and the stolid oil-and-color man, who happened to be the mayor that year. It seemed, indeed, a hopeless case to persuade these worthy people to increase their rates, to dig up the High Street under their very windows, to poison themselves and their families, and drive away custom just as the season was beginning. John confessed humbly that he had been wrong, that he should have pressed the matter more urgently upon them in the spring; but he had been ill and away, if they remembered, and others had promised to see to it. It would be all over in a week, before their regular customers arrived.

Jack's eloquence succeeded in the end. How it came about I can scarcely tell,—he himself scarcely knew. He had raised the funds, written to Lord Wargrave, and brought Colonel Hambledon himself down from town; between them they arranged with the contractors, and it was all settled, almost without anybody's leave or authority. One morning, Trevithic, hearing a dis-

tant rumble of wheels, jumped up from his breakfast and ran to his window. A file of carts and workmen were passing the end of the street; men with pickaxes and shovels; carts laden with strange-looking pipes and iron bars. Mr. Moffat, the indignant butcher, found a pit of ten feet deep at his shop door that evening; and Smutt, the baker, in a fury, had to send his wife and children to her mother, to be out of the way of the mess. In a week, however, the whole thing was done, the pit was covered over, the foul stream they dreaded was buried down deep in the earth; and then, in a little while, the tide of opinion began to turn. When all the coast was in a terror and confusion, when cholera had broken out in one place and in another, and the lodging-houses were empty, the shopkeepers loud in complaints, at Sandsea, thanks to the well-timed exertions, as people call draining, not a single case was reported; and though the season was not a good one for ordinary times, compared to other neighboring places, Sandsea was triumphant. Smutt was apologetic, Moffat was radiant, and so was Anne Bellingham in her quiet way. As for Miss Triquett, that devoted adherent, she nearly jumped for joy, hearing that the mayor of the adjoining watering-place was ill of the prevailing epidemic, and not expected to live.

And then the winter went by, and this time of excitement passed over, and the spring-time came, and John began to look about and ask questions about other men's doings and ways of life. It did not come upon him all in one day that he wanted a change, but little by little he realized that something was amiss. He himself could hardly tell what it was when Colonel Hambledon asked him one day. For one thing I think his own popularity oppressed him. He was too good-humored and good-natured not to respond to the advances which met him from one side and another; but there were but few of the people, except Miss Bellingham, with whom he felt any very real sympathy, beyond that of gratitude and good-fellowship. Colonel Hambledon was his friend, but he was almost constantly away, and the Wargraves, too, only came down from time to time. Jack would have liked to see more of Mrs. Myles, the pretty widow, but she was the only person in the place who seemed to avoid him. Colonel Coote was a silly, good-natured old man; Miss Triquett and Miss Moineaux were scarcely companions. Talking to these ladies, who agreed with every

word he said, was something like looking at his own face reflected in a spoon.

Poor Trevithic used to long to fly when they began to quote his own sermons to him; but his practice was better than his preaching, and too kind-hearted to wound their feelings by any expression of impatience, he would wait patiently while Miss Moineaux nervously tried to remember what it was that had made such an impression upon her the last time she heard him; or Miss Triquett expressed her views on the management of the poor-kitchen, and read out portions of her correspondence, such as: —

"MY DEAREST MARIA,—I have delayed answering your very kind letter until the return of the warmer weather. Deeply as I sympathize with your well-meant efforts for the welfare of your poorer neighbors, I am sorry that I cannot subscribe to the fund you are raising for the benefit of your curate."

"My aunt is blunt, very blunt," said Miss Triquett, explaining away any little awkwardness; "but she is very good, Mr. Trevithic, and you have sometimes said that we must not expect too much from our relations: I try to remember that."

It was impossible to be seriously angry. Jack looked at her oddly as she stood there by the pump in the market-place where she had caught him. How familiar the whole scene was to him! the village street, the gable of the rectory on the hill up above, Miss Triquett's immovable glare; — a stern vision of her used to rise before him long after and make him almost laugh, looking back from a different place and world, with strange eyes that had seen so many things that did not exist for him in those dear tiresome old days.

Jack and Miss Triquett were on their way to the soup-kitchen, where the district meeting was held once a month. Seeing Colonel Hambledon across the street, Trevithic escaped for a minute to speak to him, while Triquett went on. The ladies came dropping in one by one. It was a low room with a bow-window on the street, and through an open door came a smell of roast-mutton from the kitchen, where a fire was burning; and a glimpse of a poultry-yard beyond the kitchen itself. There were little mottoes hung up all about in antique spelling, such as "Caste thy bredde upon ye watteres," the fancy and design of Mrs.

Vickers, the present manager. She was very languid, and high-church, and opposed to Miss Triquett and her friend, Miss Hutchetts, who had reigned there before Mrs. Vickers' accession. This house-keeping was a serious business. It was a labor of love, and of jealousy too; each district lady took the appointment in turn, while the others looked on and ratified her measures. There was a sort of house of commons composed of Miss Simmonds, who enjoyed a certain consideration because she was so very fat; good old Mrs. Fox, with her white hair; and Mrs. Champion, a sort of lord chancellor in petticoats; and when everybody made objections the house-keeper sometimes resigned. Mrs. Vickers had held firm for some months, and here she is sorting out little tickets, writing little bills into a book, and comparing notes with the paper lists which the ladies have brought in.

"Two-and-sixpence a week for her lodging, three children, two deformed; owes fifteen shillings, deserted wife, can get no relief from the parent," Miss Moineaux reads out from her slip.

"That is a hopeless case," says Mrs. Champion; "let her go into the work-house."

"They have been there for months," says Miss Moineaux, "perhaps."

"It is no use trying to help such people," says Miss Triquett, decidedly.

"Here is a pretty doctrine," cried Miss Simmonds; "the worse off folks are the less help they may expect."

"When people are hopelessly lazy, dirty, and diseased," said Miss Triquett, with some asperity, "the money is only wasted which might be invaluable to the deserving. As long as I am entrusted with funds from this charity, I shall take care they are well bestowed."

"I—I have promised Gummers some assistance," faltered Miss Moineaux.

Miss Simmonds. "And she ought to have it, my dear."

Miss T. "I think you forget that it is for Mr. Trevithic to decide."

Miss S. "I think you are forgetting your duty as a Christian woman."

Miss T. "I choose to overlook this insult. I will appeal to Mr. Trevithic."

Miss S. "Pray do not take the trouble to forgive me, Miss Triquett, or to appeal to any one. Never since Miss Hutchetts went away—"

Miss T. "Miss Hutchetts is my friend, and I will not allow her name to be—"

Exit Miss Moineaux in alarm to call for assistance. Miss Hutchetts, as they all know, is the string of the shower-bath, the war-cry of the Amazons.

The battle was raging furiously when Miss Moineaux came back and flung herself devotedly into the mêlée. Miss Triquett was charging right and left, shells were flying, artillery rattling. It was a wonder the windows were not broken.

Mrs. Champion was engaged with a hand-to-hand fight with Miss Simmonds. Mrs. Vickers was laughing, Miss Moineaux was trembling; out of the window poured such a clamorous mob of words and swell of voices, that John and the Colonel stopped to listen instead of going in. A dog and a puppy, attracted by the noise, stood wagging their tails in the sun.

"Hutchetts — Christian dooty — dirty children — statistics — gammon," that was Miss Simmonds' voice, there was no mistaking. "Ladies, I beg," from Mrs. Vickers; and here the alarm-bell began to ring ten minutes before the children's dinner, and the sun shone, and the heads bobbed at the window, and all of a sudden there was a lull.

Trevithic, who like a coward had stopped outside while the battle was raging, ran up the low flight of steps to see what had been going on now that the danger was over, the guns silent, and the field, perhaps, strewn with the dead and the dying. No harm was done, he found, when he walked into the room, only Miss Triquett was hurt, her feelings had been wounded in the engagement, and she was murmuring that her friend Miss Hutchetts's character as a gentlewoman had been attacked, but no one was listening to her. Mrs. Vickers was talking to a smiling and pleasant-looking lady, who was standing in the middle of the room. I don't know by what natural art Mary Myles had quieted all the turmoil which had been raging a minute before, but her pretty, winsome ways had an interest and fascination for them all; for old Miss Triquett herself, who had not very much that was pleasant or pretty to look at, and who by degrees seemed to be won over too to forget Miss Hutchetts, in her interest in what this pretty widow was saying,—it was only something about a school-treat in her garden. She stopped short and blushed as Trevithic came in. "Oh, here is Mr. Trevithic," she said; "I will wait till he has finished his business."

Jack would rather not have entered into it in her presence, but he began as usual, and plodded on methodically, and entered into the mysteries of soup meat, and flan-nelling, and rheumatics, and the various ills and remedies of life; but he could not help feeling a certain scorn for himself, and embarrassment and contempt for the shame he was feeling; and as he caught Mary Myles' bright, still eyes curiously fixed upon him, Jack wondered whether anywhere else in the world, away from these curious glances, he might not find work to do more congenial and worthy of the name. It was not Mrs. Myles' presence which affected him so greatly, but it seemed like the last grain in the balance against this chirruping, tea-drinking life he had been leading so long. It was an impossibility any longer. He was tired of it. There was not one of these old women who was not doing her part more completely than he was, with more heart and good spirit than himself.

Some one had spoken to him of a work-house chaplaincy going begging at Hammersley, a great inland town on the borders of Wales. Jack was like a clock which begins to strike as soon as the hands point to the hour. That very night he determined to go over and see the place; and he wrote to a friend of his at Hammersley to get him permission, and to tell the authorities of the intention with which he came.

CHAPTER III.

AN OGRESS.

WHEN John Trevithic, with his radiant, cheerful face, marched for the first time through the wards of St. Magdalene's, the old creatures propped up on their pillows to see him pass, both the master and mistress went with him, duly impressed with his possible importance, and pointed out one person and another; and as the mighty trio advanced the poor souls cringed, and sighed and greeted them with strange nods, and gasps, and contortions. John trudged along, saying little, but glancing right and left with his bright eyes. He was very much struck, and somewhat overcome by the sight of so much that was sad, and in orderly rows, and a blue cotton uniform. Was this to be his charge? all these hundreds of weary years, all these aching limbs, and desolate waifs from stranded homes,

this afflicted multitude of past sufferings. He said nothing, but walked along with his hands in his pockets, looking in vain to see some face brighten at the master's approach. The faces worked, twitched, woke up eagerly, but not one caught the light which is reflected from the heart. What endless wards, what a labyrinth of woes enclosed in the whitewashed walls! A few poor prints of royal personages, and of hog-gathering, and Christmas out of the *London News*, were hanging on them. Whitewash and blue cotton, and weary faces in the women's wards; whitewash and brown fustian, and sullen, stupid looks in the men's; this was all Trevithic carried away in his brain that first day; — misery and whitewash, and a dull, choking atmosphere, from which he was ashamed almost to escape out into the street, into the square, into the open fields outside the town, across which his way led back to the station.

Man proposes, and if ever a man honestly proposed and determined to do his duty, it was John Trevithic, stretched out in his railway corner, young and stout of heart and of limb, eager for change and for work. He was not very particular; troubles did not oppose him morbidly. He had not been bred up in so refined a school that poverty and suffering frightened him; but the sight of all this hopelessness, age, failure, all neatly stowed away, and whitewashed over in those stony wards, haunted him all the way home. They haunted him all the way up to the rectory, where he was to dine that evening, and between the intervals of talk, which were pretty frequent after Miss Bellingham had left the room and the two gentlemen to their claret. Jack had almost made up his mind, and indeed he felt like a traitor as he came into the drawing-room, and he saw how Anne brightened up as she beckoned him across the room and made him sit down beside her. A great full harvest-moon was shining in at the window, a nightingale was singing its melancholy song, a little wind blew in and rustled round the room, and Anne, in her muslins and laces, looked like a beautiful, pale, pensive, dream-lady by his side. Perhaps he might not see her again, he thought rather sentimentally, and that henceforth their ways would lie asunder. But how kind she had been to him! How pretty she was! What graceful, womanly ways she had! How sorry he should be to part from her! He came away and said good-by quite sadly, looking in her face with a sort of apology,

as if to beg her pardon for what he was going to do. He had a feeling that she would be sorry that he should leave her — a little sorry, although she was far removed from him. The nightingale sang to him all the way home along the lane, and Jack slept very sound, and awoke in the morning quite determined in his mind. As his landlady brought in his breakfast-tray he said to himself that there was nothing more to keep him at Sandsea, and then he sat down and wrote to Mr. Bellingham that instant, and sent up the note by Mrs. Bazley's boy.

A little later in the day Trevithic went over to the rectory himself. He wanted to get the matter quite settled, for he could not help feeling sorry as he came along and wondering whether he had been right after all. He asked for the rector and the man showed him into the study, and in a minute more the door opened; but it was Miss Bellingham, not her father, who came in.

She looked very strange and pale, and put out two trembling hands, in one of which she was holding John's letter.

"O Mr. Trevithic! what is this? what does this mean?" she said.

What indeed? he need never have written the words, for in another minute, suddenly Miss Bellingham burst into tears.

They were very ill-timed tears as far as her own happiness was concerned, as well as that of poor John Trevithic, who stood by full of compassion, of secret terror at his own weakness, of which for the first time he began to suspect the extent. He was touched and greatly affected. He walked away to the fireplace and came back and stood before her, an honest, single-hearted young fellow, with an immense compassion for weak things, such as women and children, and a great confidence in himself; and as he stood there he flushed in a struggle of compassion, attraction, revulsion, pity, and cruel disappointment. Those tears coming just then relieved Anne Bellingham's heavy heart as they flowed in a passionate stream, and at the same time they quenched many a youthful fire, destroyed in their track many a dream of battle and victory, of persevering struggle and courageous efforts for the rights of the wronged upon earth. They changed the course of Trevithic's life at the time, though in the end, perhaps, who shall say that it was greatly altered by the complainings and foolish fondness of this poor soul whom he was now trying to quiet and comfort? I, for my part, don't believe that peo-

ple are so much affected by circumstance in the long run as some people would have it. We think it a great matter that we turned to the right or the left; but both paths go over the hill. Jack, as his friends called him, had determined to leave a certain little beaten track, of which he was getting weary, and he had come up to say good-by to a friend of his, and to tell her that he was going, and this was the result.

She went on crying, — she could not help herself now. She was a fragile-looking little thing, a year or so younger than Jack, her spiritual curate and future husband, whom she had now known for two years.

"You see there is nothing particular for me to do here," he stammered, blushing. "A great, strong fellow like myself ought to be putting his shoulder to the wheel."

"I — I had so hoped that you had been happy here with us," said Miss Bellingham.

"Of course I have been happy, — happier than I have ever been in my life," said Jack, with some feeling; "and I shall never forget your kindness; but the fact is, I have been too happy. This is a little haven where some worn-out old veteran might recruit and grow young again in your kind keeping. It's no place for a raw recruit like myself."

"Oh, think — oh, think of it again!" faltered Anne. "Please change your mind. We would try and make it less — less worldly — more like what you wish."

"No, dear lady," said Trevithic, half smiling, half sighing. "You are goodness and kindness itself, but I must be consistent, I'm afraid. Nobody wants me here; I may be of use elsewhere, and . . . O Miss Bellingham! don't — don't — pray don't —"

"You know — you know you are wanted here," cried Miss Bellingham; and the momentous tears began to flow again down her cheeks all unchecked, though she put up her fingers to hide them. She was standing by a table, a slim creature, in a white dress. "Oh, forgive me!" she sobbed, and she put out one tear-washed hand to him, and then she pushed him away with her weak violence, and went and flung herself down into her father's big chair, and leaned against the old red cushion in an agony of grief and shame and despair. Her little dog began barking furiously at John, and her bird began to sing, and all the afternoon sun was streaming and blinding into the room.

"Oh, don't, don't despise me!" moaned the poor thing, putting up her weary hand to her head. The action was so helpless,

the voice so pathetic, that Trevithic resisted no longer.

"Despise you, my poor darling!" said John, utterly melted and overcome, and he stooped over, and took the poor little soul into his arms. "I see," he said, "that we two must never be parted again, and if I go, you must come with me."

It was done. It was over. When Jack dashed back to his lodging it was in a state of excitement so great that he had hardly time to ask himself whether it was for the best or the worst. The tears of the trembling, appealing, little quivering figure had so unnerved him, so touched and affected him, that he had hardly known what he said or what he did not say, his pity and innate tenderness of heart had carried him away; it was more like a mother than a lover that he took this poor little fluttering bird into his keeping, and vowed and prayed to keep it safe. But everything was vague, and new, and unlikeness as yet. The future seemed floating with shadows and vibrations, and waving and settling into the present. He had left home a free man, with a career before him, without ties to check him or to hold him back (except, indeed, the poor old mother in her little house at Barfleet, but that clasp was so slight, so gentle, so unselfish, that it could scarcely be counted one now). And now, "Chained and bound by the ties of our sins," something kept dinning in his bewildered brain.

Mrs. Bazley opened the door with her usual grin of welcome, and asked him if he had lunched, or if she should bring up the tray. Trevithic shook his head, and brushed past her up the stairs, leaping three or four at a time, and he dashed into his own room, and banged the door, and went and leaned up against the wall, with his hand to his head, in a dizzy, sickened, miserable bewilderment, at which he himself was shocked and frightened. What had he done,—what would this lead to? He paced up and down his room until he could bear it no longer, and then he went back to the rectory. Anne had been watching for him, and came out to meet him, and slid her jealous hand in his arm.

"Come away," she whispered. "There are some people in the house. Mary Myles is there talking to papa. I have not told him yet. I can't believe it enough to tell any one."

John could hardly believe it either, or that this was the Miss Bellingham he had known hitherto. She seemed so dear, so

changed, this indolent county beauty, this calm young mistress of the house, now bright, quick, excited, moved to laughter; a hundred sweet tints and colors seemed awakened and brought to light which he had never noticed or suspected before.

"I have a reason," Anne went on. "I want you to speak of this to no one but me and papa. I will tell you very soon, perhaps to-morrow. Here, come and sit under the lilac-tree, and then they cannot see us from the drawing-room."

Anne's reason was this, that the rector of a living in her father's gift was dying, but she was not sure that Jack would be content to wait for a dead man's shoes, and she gave him no hint of a scheme she had made.

The news of John's departure spread very quickly, but that of his engagement was only suspected; and no allusion to his approaching marriage was made when the teapot was presented to him in state.

I have ventured to christen my hero Jack, after a celebrated champion of that name; but we all know how the giant-killer himself fell asleep in the forest soon after he received the badge of honor and distinction to which he was so fairly entitled. Did poor John Trevithic, now the possessor of the teapot of honor, fall asleep thus early on his travels and forget all his hopes and his schemes? At first, in the natural excitement of his engagement, he put off one plan and another, and wrote to delay his application for the chaplaincy of the workhouse. He had made a great sacrifice for Anne; for he was not in love with her, as he knew from the very beginning; but he soon fell into the habit of caring for her and petting her, and, little by little, her devotion and blind partiality seemed to draw him nearer and nearer to the new ways he had accepted. The engagement gave great satisfaction. Hambledon shook him warmly by the hand, and said something about a better vocation than Bumbledom and workhouses. Jack bit his lips. It was a sore point with him, and he could not bear to think of it.

How Anne had begged and prayed and insisted, and put up her gentle hands in entreaty, when he had proposed to take her to live there.

"It would kill me," she said. "O John! there is something much better, much more useful for you coming in a very little while. I wanted people to hear of our marriage and of our new home together. Poor old

Mr. Yorden is dead. Papa is going to give us his Lincolnshire living; it is his very own. Are you too proud to take anything from me, to whom you have given your life?" And her wistful entreaties were not without their effect, as she clung to him with her strange, jealous eagerness. The determined young fellow gave in again and again. He had fallen into one of those moods of weakness and irresolution of which one has heard even among the fiercest and boldest of heroes. It was so great a sacrifice to him to give up his dreams that it never occurred to him for a moment that he was deserting his flag. It was a strange transformation which had come over this young fellow, of which the least part was being married.

I don't know whether the old ladies were disappointed or not that he did not actually go away as soon as was expected. The announcement of his marriage, however, made up for everything else, and they all attended the ceremony. Mr. and Mrs. Trevithic went away for their honeymoon, and to see old Mrs. Trevithic at Barfleet, and then they came back to the rectory until the house in Lincolnshire should be ready to receive them.

For some time after his marriage, Jack could hardly believe that so great an event had come about so easily. Nothing was much changed; the port-wine twinkled in the same decanters, the old rector dozed off in his chair after dinner, the sunset streamed into the dining-room from the same gap in the trees which skirted the church-yard. Anne, in the drawing-room in her muslins and lilac ribbons, sewed her worsted work in her corner by the window, or strummed her variations on the piano-forte. Tumty tinkle tumty — no — tinkle tumty tumty, as she corrected herself at the same place in the same song. "Do you know the songs without words?" she used to say to him when he first came. Know them? At the end of six weeks poor Jack could have told you every note of the half-dozen songs which Anne had twitted out so often, only she put neither song nor words to the notes, nor time, nor anything but pedals and fingers. One of these she was specially fond of playing. It begins with a few tramping chords and climbs on to a solemn blast that might be sounded in a cathedral or at the triumphant funeral of a warrior dying in victory. Anne had taken it into her head to play this with expression, and to drag out the crisp chords, — some of them

she thought sounded prettier in a higher octave, — and then she would look up with an archly affectionate smile as she flushed. Jack used to respond with a kind little nod of the head at first, but he could not admire his wife's playing, and he wished she would mind her music and not be thinking of herself and nodding at him all the time. Had he promised to stuff up his ears with cotton-wool and to act fibs at the altar? He didn't know; he rather thought he had — he — pshaw! Where was that number of the *North British Review*? and the young man went off into his study to look for it and to escape from himself.

Poor Jack! He dimly felt now and then that all his life he should have to listen to tunes such as these, and be expected to beat time to them. Like others before and since, he began to feel that what one expects and what is expected of one, are among the many impossible conditions of life. You don't get it and you don't give it, and you never will as long as you live, except, indeed, when Heaven's sacred fire of love comes to inspire and teach you to do unconsciously and gladly what is clearer and nearer and more grateful than the result of hours of straining effort and self-denial.

But these hours were a long way off as yet, and Jack was still asking himself how much longer it would all last, and how could it be that he was here settled for life and a married man, and that that pale little woman with the straight, smooth, light hair was his wife, and that fat old gentleman fast asleep, who had been his rector a few weeks ago, was his father-in-law now, while all the world went on as usual, and nothing had changed except the relations of these three people to each other?

Poor Jack! He had got a treasure of a wife, I suppose. Anne Bellingham had ruled at the rectory for twenty-four years with a calm, despotic sway that old Mr. Bellingham never attempted to dispute. Gentle, obstinate, ladylike, graceful, with a clear complexion, and one of those thin, transparent noses which some people admire, she glided about in her full, flitting skirts, feeling herself the prop and elegant comforter of her father's declining years. She used to put rosebuds into his study; and though old Mr. Bellingham didn't care for flowers, and disliked anything upon his table, he never thought of removing the slender glass fabric his daughter's white fingers had so carefully ornamented. She took care that clean muslin covers, with neat little bows at each cor-

ner, should duly succeed one another over the back of the big study-chair. It is true the muslin scratched Mr. Bellingham's bald head, and he once ventured to remove the objectionable pinafore with his careful, clumsy old fingers; but next day he found it was firmly and neatly stretched down in its place again, and it was beyond his skill to unpick the threads. Anne also took care that her father's dressing things should be put out for dinner; and if the poor old gentleman delayed or tried to evade the ceremony, the startled man who cleaned the plate and waited upon them was instructed to tell his master that the dressing-bell had rung; housemaids came in to tidy the room; windows were opened to renew the air; the poor rector could only retire and do as he was bid. How Anne had managed all her life to get her own way in everything is more than I can explain. It was a very calm, persistent, common-place way, but every one gave in to it. And so it happened that as soon as Jack was her husband, Anne expected that he was to change altogether; see with her pink, watery eyes; care for the things she cared for; and be content henceforth with her mild aspirations after county society in this world, and a good position in the next. Anne imagined, in some vague manner, that these were both good things to be worked out together by punctuality on Sundays, family prayer, a certain amount of attention to their neighbors (varying, of course, with the position of the persons in question), and due regard for the decencies of life. To see her rustling into church in her long silk dress and French bonnet, with her smooth bands of hair, the slender hands neatly gloved, and the prayer-book, hymn-book, pocket-handkerchief, and smelling-bottle, all her little phylacteries in their places, was an example to the neighborhood: to the vulgar Christians straggling in from the lodging-houses and the town, and displaying their flyaway hats or highly-pomatummed heads of hair; to the little charity children, gaping at her over the wooden gallery; to St. Mary Magdalene up in the window, with her tangled locks; to Mrs. Coote herself, who always came in late, with her four little girls tumbling over her dress and shuffling after her; not to mention Trevithic himself, up in his reading-desk, leaning back in his chair. For the last six months, in the excitement of his presence, in the disturbance of her usual equable frame of mind, it was scarcely the real Anne Bellingham he had known, or maybe per-

haps it was the real woman stirred out of her Philistinism by the great tender hand of nature and the wonderful inspiration of love. Now, day by day, her old ways began to grow upon her. Jack had not been married three weeks before a sort of terror began quietly to overwhelm him, a terror of his wife's genteel infallibility. As for Anne, she had got what she wanted; she had cried for the moon, and it was hers; and she, too, began almost immediately to feel that now she had got it she did not know what to do with it exactly. She wanted it to turn the other way, and it wouldn't go, and to rise at the same hour, and it seemed to change day by day on purpose to vex her.

And then she cried again, poor woman; but her tears were of little avail. I suppose Jack was very much to blame, and certainly at this time his popularity declined a little, and people shrugged their shoulders and said he was a lucky young fellow to get a pretty girl and a good living and fifteen thousand pounds in one morning, and that he had feathered his nest well. And so he had, poor fellow, only too well, for to be sunk in a moral feather-bed is not the most enviable of fates to an active-minded man of six or seven and twenty.

The morning after their return Anne had dragged him out to her favorite lilac-tree bench upon the height in the garden, from whence you can see all the freshness of the morning brightening from bay to bay green, close at hand, salt wave and more green down below, busy life on land, and a flitting, drifting, white-sailed life upon the water. As Trevithic looked at it all with a momentary admiration, his wife said,—

"Isn't it much nicer to be up here with me, John, than down in those horrid lodgings in the town?"

And John laughed, and said, "Yes, the air was very delicious."

"You needn't have worked so hard at that draining, if you had been living up here." Anne went on, quite unconsciously. "I do believe one might live forever in this place, and never get any harm from those miserable places. I hear there is small pox in Mark's Alley. Promise me, dear, that you will not go near them."

"I am afraid I must go if they want me," said John.

"No, dearest," Anne said gently. "You have to think of me first now. It would be wrong of you to go. Papa and I have never had the small-pox."

Trevithic didn't answer. As his wife

spoke, something else spoke too. The little boats glittered and scudded on; the whole sight was as sweet and prosperous as it had been a minute before; but he was not looking at it any more; a strange new feeling had seized hold of him, a devil of sudden growth, and Trevithic was so little used to self-contemplation and inner experience, that it shocked him and frightened him to find himself standing there calmly talking to his wife, without any quarrel angry in his heart, without any separation parted from her. "Anne and I could not be farther apart at this instant," thought John, "if I were at the other side of that sea, and she standing here all alone."

"What is the matter?" said poor Anne, affectionately, brushing a little thread off his coat.

"Can't you understand?" said he, drawing away.

"Understand?" Anne repeated. "I know that you are naughty, and want to do what you must not think of."

"I thought when I married you, you cared for the things that I care about," cried poor John, exasperated by her playfulness, "and understood that a man must do his business in life, and that marriage does not absolve him from every other duty. I thought you cared — you said you did — for the poor people in trouble down there. Don't make it difficult for me to go to them, dear."

"No, dear John. I could not possibly allow it," said his wife, decidedly. "You are not a doctor; and it is not your business to nurse small-pox patients. Papa never thinks of going any where where there is infection."

"My dear Anne," said John, fairly out of temper, "nobody ever thought your father had done his duty by the place, and you must allow your husband to go his own way, and not interfere any more."

"It is very, very wrong of you, John, to say such things," said Anne, flushing, and speaking very slowly and gently. "You forget yourself and me, too, I think, when you speak so coarsely. You should begin your reforms at home, and learn to control your temper before you go and preach to people with dreadful illnesses. They cannot

possibly want you, or be in a fit state to be visited."

If Anne had only lost her temper, flared up at him, talked nonsense, he could have borne it better, but there she stood, quiet, composed, infinitely his superior in her perfect self-possession. Jack left her, all ashamed of himself, in a fume and a fury, as he strode down into the town.

The small-pox turned out to be a false alarm, spread by some ingenious parishioners who wished for relief, and who greatly disliked the visits of the excellent district ladies, and the matter was compromised. But that afternoon Miss Triquett, meeting John in the street, gave a penetrating and searching glance into his face. He looked out of spirits. Miss Triquett noticed it, and her heart, which had been somewhat hardened against him, melted at once.

Jack and his wife made it up. Anne relented, and something of her better self brought her to meet him half-way. Once more the strange, accustomed feeling came to him, on Sundays especially. Old Billy Hunsden came clopping into church just as usual. There was the clerk, with his toothless old warble joining in with the chirp of the charity-school children. The three rows of grinning little faces were peering at him from the organ-loft. There was the empty bench at the top, where the mistress sat throned in state; the marble roll down in the middle of the second lesson, with all the children looking preternaturally innocent, and as if they did not hear the noise; the old patches of color were darting upon the pulpit cushion from St. Mary Magdalene's red scarf in the east window. These are all small things, but they had taken possession of my hero, John, one afternoon, who was preaching away the first Sunday after he had come back from his wedding-trip, hardly knowing what he said, but conscious of Anne's wistful gaze from the rectory pew, and of the curious eyes of all the old women in the free-seats, who dearly love a timely word, and who had made up their minds to be stirred up that Sunday. It was not a bad sermon, but it was of things neither the preacher nor his congregation cared to hear very much.

JACK THE GIANT-KILLER.

PART SECOND.

JACK THE GIANT-KILLER.

PART II.

CHAPTER IV.

JACK GOES TO SLEEP IN THE WOOD.

FEATHERSTON VICARAGE was a quaint, dreary, silent old baked block of bricks and stucco, standing on one of those low Lincolnshire hillocks — I do not know the name for them. They are not hills, but mounds; they have no shape or individuality, but they roll in on every side; they enclose the horizon; they stop the currents of fresh air; they give no feature to the foreground. There was no reason why the vicarage should have been built upon this one, more than upon any other, of the monotonous waves of the dry ocean of land which spreads and spreads about Featherston, unchanging in its monotonous line. To look from the upper windows of the vicarage is like looking out at sea, with nothing but the horizon to watch, — a dull sand and dust horizon, with monotonous waves and lines that do not even change or blend like the waves of the sea.

Anne was delighted with the place when she first came. Of course it was not to compare with Sandsea for pleasantness and freshness, but the society was infinitely better. Not all the lodging-houses at Sandsea could supply such an eligible circle of acquaintances as that which came driving up day after day to the vicarage door. The carriages, after depositing their owners, would go champing up the road to the little tavern of "The Five Horseshoes," at the entrance of the village, in search of hay and beer for the horses and men. Anne in one afternoon entertained two honorables, a countess, and two Lady Louisas. The countess was Lady Kidderminster and one of the Lady Louisas was her daughter. The other was a nice old maid, a cousin of Mrs. Myles, and she told Mrs. Trevithic something more of poor Mary Myles' married life than Anne had ever known before.

"It is very distressing," said Anne, with a ladylike volubility, as she walked across

the lawn with her guest to the carriage "when married people do not get on comfortably together. Depend upon it, there are generally faults on both sides. I dare say it is very uncharitable of me, but I generally think the woman is to blame when things go wrong," said Anne, with a little conscious smirk. "Of course we must be content to give up some things when we marry. Sandsea was far pleasanter than this as a residence; but where my husband's interests were concerned, Lady Louisa, I did not hesitate. I hope to get this into some order in time, as soon as I can persuade Mr. Trevithic."

"You were quite right, quite right," said Lady Louisa, looking round approvingly at the grass-grown walks and straggling hedges. "Although Mary is my own cousin, I always felt that she did not understand poor Tom. Of course he had his little fidgety ways, like the rest of us."

(Mary had never described her husband's little fidgety ways to anybody at much length, and if brandy, and blows, and oaths were among them, these trifles were forgotten now that Tom was respectably interred in the family vault and beyond reproaches.)

Lady Louisa went away favorably impressed by young Mrs. Trevithic's good sense and high-mindedness. Anne, too, was very much pleased with her afternoon. She went and took a complacent turn in her garden after the old lady's departure. She hardly knew where the little paths led to as yet, nor the look of the fruit-walls and of the twigs against the sky, as people do who have well paced their garden-walks in rain, wind, and sunshine, in spirits and disquiet, at odd times and sad times and happy ones. It was all new to Mrs. Trevithic, and she glanced about as she went, plaining a rose-tree here, a creeper there, a clearance among the laurels. "I must let in a peep of the church through that elm-clump, and plant some fuchsias along that bank," she thought. (Anne was fond of fuchsias.) "And John must give me a hen-house.

The cook can attend to it. The place looks melancholy and neglected without any animals about; we must certainly buy a pig. What a very delightful person Lady Kidderminster is; she asked me what sort of carriage we meant to keep—I should think with economy we *might* manage a pair. I shall get John to leave everything of that sort to me. I shall give him so much for his pocket-money and charities, and do the very best I can with the rest." And Anne sincerely meant it when she made this determination, and walked along better pleased than ever, feeling that with her hand to pilot it along the tortuous way their ship could not run aground, but would come straight and swift into the haven of country society, for which they were making, drawn by a couple of prancing horses, and a riding horse possibly for John. And seeing her husband coming through the gate and crossing the sloping lawn, Anne hurried to meet him with glowing pink cheeks and tips to her eyelids and nose, eager to tell him her schemes and adventures.

Trevithic himself had come home tired and dispirited, and he could scarcely listen to his wife's chirrups with very great sympathy or encouragement.

"Lady Kidderminster wishes us to set up a carriage and a pair of horses!"

Poor Trevithic cried out aghast, "Why, my dear Anne, you must be—must be—What do you imagine our income to be?"

"I know very well what it is," Anne said, with a nod; "better than you do, sir. With care and economy a very great deal is to be done. Leave everything to me and don't trouble your foolish old head."

"But, my dear, you must listen for one minute," Trevithic said. "One thousand a year is not limitless. There are calls and drains upon our incomings—"

"That is exactly what I wanted to speak to you about, John," said his wife, gravely. "For one thing, I have been thinking that your mother has a very comfortable income of her own," Anne said, "and I am sure she would gladly—"

"I have no doubt she would," Trevithic interrupted, looking full in his wife's face, "and that is the reason that I desire that the subject may never be alluded to again, either to her or to me." He looked so decided and stern, and his gray eagle eyes opened wide in a way his wife knew that meant no denial. Vexed as she was, she could not help a momentary womanly feeling of admiration for the undaunted and

decided rule of the governor of this small kingdom in which she was vicegerent; she felt a certain pride in her husband, not in what was best in his temper and heart, but in the outward signs that any one might read. His good looks, his manly bearing, his determination before which she had to give way again and again, impressed her oddly; she followed him with her eyes as he walked away into the house, and went on with her calculations as she still paced the gravel path, determining to come back secretly to the charge, as was her way, from another direction, and failing again, only to ponder upon a fresh attack.

And meanwhile Anne was tolerably happy trimming her rose-trees, and arranging and rearranging the furniture, visiting at the big houses, and corresponding with her friends, and playing on the piano, and, with her baby, in time, when it came to live with them in the vicarage. Trevithic was tolerably miserable, fuming and consuming his days in a restless, impatient search for the treasures which did not exist in the arid fields and lanes round about the vicarage. He certainly discovered a few well-to-do farmers riding about their enclosures on their rough horses, and responding with surly nods to his good-humored advances; a few old women selling lollipops in their tidy front kitchens, shining pots and pans, starch caps, the very pictures of respectability; little tidy children trotting to school along the lanes, hand in hand, with all the strings on their pinasores, and hard-working mothers scrubbing their parlors, or hanging out their linen to dry. The cottages were few and far between, for the farmers farmed immense territories; the laborers were out in the fields at sunrise, and toiled all day, and staggered home worn-out and stupefied at night; the little pinasores released from school at mid-day, would trot along the furrows with their fathers' and brothers' dinners tied up in bundles, and drop little frightened courtesies along the hedges when they met the vicar on his rounds. Dreary, dusty rounds they were,—illimitable circles. The country-folks did not want his sermons, they were too stupid to understand what he said, they were too aimless and dispirited. Jack the Giant-Killer's sleep lasted exactly three years in Trevithic's case, during which the time did not pass, it only ceased to be. Once old Mr. Bellingham paid them a visit, and once Mrs. Trevithic, senior, arrived with her cap-boxes, and then everything

again went on as usual, until Dulcie came to live with her father and mother in the old sun-baked, wasp-haunted place.

Dulcie was a little portable almanac to mark the time for both of them, and the seasons and the hour of the day, something in this fashion:—

Six months and Dulcie began to crawl across the druggetted floor of her father's study; nine months, to crow and hold out her arms; a year must have gone by, for Dulcie was making sweet inarticulate chatteringings and warblings, which changed into words by degrees,—wonderful words of love and content and recognition, after her tiny life-long silence. Dulcie's clock marked the time of day something in this fashion:—

Dulcie's breakfast o'clock.

Dulcie's walk in the garden o'clock.

Dulcie's dinner o'clock.

Dulcie's bedtime o'clock, etc.

All the tenderness of Jack's heart was Dulcie's. Her little fat fingers would come tapping and scratching at his study-door long before she could walk. She was not in the least afraid of him, as her mother was sometimes. She did not care for his sad moods, nor sympathize with his ambitions, or understand the pangs and pains he suffered, the regrets and wounded vanities and aspirations. Was time passing, was he wasting his youth and strength in that forlorn and stagnant Lincolnshire fen? What was it to her? Little Dulcie thought that when he crossed his legs and danced her on his foot, her papa was fulfilling all the highest duties of life; and when she let him kiss her soft cheek, it did not occur to her that every wish of her heart was not gratified. Hard-hearted, unsympathetic, trustful, and appealing little comforter and companion! Whatever it might be to Anne, not even Lady Kidderminster's society soothed and comforted Jack as Dulcie's did. This small Egyptian was a hard task-mistress, for she gave him bricks to make without any straw, and kept him a prisoner in a land of bondage. But for her he would have thrown up the work that was so insufficient for him, and crossed the Red Sea, and chanced the fortunes of life; but with Dulcie and her mother hanging to the skirts of his long, black, clerical coat, how could he go? Ought he to go? 400L a year is a large sum to get together, but a small one to provide for three people,—so long as a leg of mutton costs seven shillings, and there are but twenty shillings in the pound, and 365 days in the year.

It was a hot, sultry afternoon; the dust was lying thick upon the lanes, on the country roads, that went creeping away white in the glare to this and that distant sleepy hollow. The leaves in the hedges were hanging upon their stalks; the convolvulus and blackberries drooped their heads beneath the clouds that rose from the wreaths and piles of dust along the way. Four o'clock was striking from the steeple, and echoing through the hot, still air; nobody was to be seen, except one distant figure crossing a stubble-field. The vicarage windows were close-shuttered, but the gate was on the latch and the big dog had just sauntered lazily through. Anne heard the clock strike from her darkened bed room, where she was lying upon the sofa resting. Dulcie playing in her nursery counted the strokes. "Tebben, two, one; nonner one," that was how she counted. John heard the clock strike as he was crossing the dismal stubble-field; everything else was silent. Two butterflies went flitting before him in the desolate glare. It was all so still, so dreary, and feverish, that he tried to escape into a shadier field, and to force his way through a gap in the parched hedge regardless of Farmer Burr's fences and restrictions.

On the other side of the hedge there was a smaller field, a hollow with long grasses and nut hedges and a little shade, and a ditch over which Trevithic sprang with some remnant of youthful spirit. He sprang, breaking through the briars and countless twigs and limp wretched leaves, making a foot-standing for himself among the lank grasses and dull autumn flowers on the other side, and, as he sprang, he caught a sight of something lying in the ditch,—something with half-open lips, and dim glazed eyes, turned upwards under the crossing diamond network of the shadow and light of the briars.

What was this that was quite still, quite inanimate, lying in the sultry glow of the autumn day? Jack turned a little sick, and leaped back down among the dead leaves, and stooped over a wan, helpless figure lying there motionless and ghastly, with its head sunk back in the dust and tangled weeds. It was only a worn and miserable-looking old man, whose meek, starved, weary face was upturned to the sky, whose wan lips were drawn apart, and whose thin hands were clutching at the weeds. Jack gently tried to loosen the clutch, and the poor fingers gave way in an instant and

fell helplessly among the grasses, frightening a field-mouse back into its hole. But this helpless, loose fall first gave Trevithic some idea of life in the hopeless figure, for all its wan, rigid lines. He put his hand under the rags which covered the breast. There was no pulse at first, but presently the heart just fluttered, and a little color came into the pale face, and there was a long sigh, and then the glazed eyes closed.

John set to work to rub the cold hands and the stiff body. It was all he could do, for people don't walk about with bottles of brandy and blankets in their pockets; but he rubbed and rubbed, and some of the magnetism of his own vigorous existence seemed to enter into the poor soul at his knees, and another faint flush of life came into the face, and the eyes opened this time naturally and bright, and the figure pointed faintly to its lips. Jack understood, and he nodded; gave a tug to the man's shoulders, and propped him up a little higher against the bank. Then he tied his handkerchief round the poor old bald head to protect it from the sun, and sprang up the side of the ditch. He had remembered a turnpike upon the highway, two or three hundred yards beyond the boundary of the next field.

Lady Kidderminster, who happened to be driving along that afternoon on her way to Potlington flower-show, and who was leaning back comfortably under the hood of her great yellow barouche, was surprised to see from under the fringe of her parasol the figure of a man suddenly bursting through a hedge on the roadside, and waving a hat and shouting, red, heated, disordered, frantically signifying to the coachman to stop.

"It's a Fenian," screamed her ladyship.

"I think, — yes, it's Mr. Trevithic," said her companion.

The coachman, too, had recognized Jack and began to draw up; but the young man, who had now reached the side of the carriage, signed to him to go on.

"Will you give me a lift?" he said, gasping and springing on to the step. "How d'ye do, Lady Kidderminster? I heard your wheels and made an effort," and Jack turned rather pale. "There is a poor fellow dying in a ditch. I want some brandy for him and some help; stop at the turnpike," he shouted to the coachman, and then he turned with very good grace to Lady Kidderminster, aghast and not over-pleased. "Pray forgive me," he said. "It

was such a chance catching you. I never thought I should have done it. I was two fields off. Why, how d'ye do, Mrs. Myles?" And still holding on to the yellow barouche by one hand, he put out the other to his old acquaintance, Mary Myles, with the still, kind eyes, who was sitting in state by the countess.

"You will take me back, and the brandy, I know?" said Trevithic.

"Is it anybody one knows?" said the countess.

"Only some tramp," said Jack; "but it's a mercy I met you." And before they reached the turnpike, he had jumped down, and was explaining his wants to the bewildered old chip of a woman who collected the tolls.

"Your husband not here? a pity," said John. "Give me his brandy-bottle; it will be of some good for once." And he disappeared into the lodge, saying, — "Would you please have the horses' heads turned, Lady Kidderminster?" In a minute he was out again. "Here, put this in" (to the powdered footman), and John thrust a blanket off the bed, an old three-legged chair, a wash-jug full of water, and one or two more miscellaneous objects into the man's arms. "Now back again," he said, "as quick as you can!" And he jumped in with his brandy; and the great barouche groaned, and, at his command, actually sped off once more along the road. "Make haste," said Trevithic. "The man is dying for want of a dram."

The sun blazed hot in their faces. The footman sat puzzled and disgusted on his perch, clasping the blanket and the water-jug. Lady Kidderminster was not sure that she was not offended by all the orders Mr. Trevithic was giving her servants; Mrs. Myles held the three-legged chair up on the seat opposite with her slender wrist, and looked kind and sympathetic. John hardly spoke, — he was thinking what would be best to do next.

"I am so sorry," he said, "but I am afraid you must wait for us, Lady Kidderminster. I'll bring him up as soon as I can, and we will drop him at the first cottage. You see nobody else may pass for hours."

"We shall be very late for our fl—," Lady Kidderminster began, faintly, and then stopped ashamed at the look in Trevithic's honest face which she saw reflected in Mrs. Myles' eyes.

"O my dear Lady Kidderminster," cried

Mrs. Myles, bending forward from her nest of white muslina. "We must wait."

"Of course we will wait," said Lady Kidderminster, hastily, as the coachman stopped at the gap through which Jack had first made his appearance. Trevithic was out in an instant.

"Bring those things quick," said Jack to the magnificent powder-and-plush man; and he set off running himself as hard as he could go, with his brandy-flask in one hand and the water-jug in the other.

For an instant the man hesitated and looked at his mistress, but Lady Kidderminster had now caught something of Mr. Trevithic's energy. She imperiously pointed to the three-legged chair, and Tomlins, who was good-natured in the main, seeing Jack's figure rapidly disappearing in the distance, began to run too, with his silken legs plunging wildly, for pumps and stubble are not the most comfortable of combinations. When Tomlins reached the ditch at last, Jack was pouring old Glossop's treacle-like brandy down the poor gasping tramp's throat, dashing water into his face, and gradually bringing him to life again; the sun was streaming upon the two, the insects buzzing, and the church clock striking the half-hour.

There are combinations in life more extraordinary than pumps and ploughed fields. When Trevithic and Tomlins staggered up to the carriage carrying the poor, old, ragged, half-lifeless creature on the chair between them, the two be-satined and be-feathered ladies made way and helped them to put poor, helpless old Davy Hopkins, with all his rags, into the soft-cushioned corner, and drove off with him in triumph to the little public at the entrance of Featherston, where they left him.

"You have saved that man's life," said Jack, as he said good-by to the two ladies. They left him standing, glad and excited, in the middle of the road, with bright eyes and more animation and interest in his face than there had been for many a day.

"My dear Jack, what is this I hear?" said Anne, when he got home. "Have you been to the flower-show with Lady Kidderminster? Who was that in the carriage with her? What a state you are in!"

Jack told her his story, but Mrs. Trevithic scarcely listened. "Oh," said she, "I thought you had been doing something pleasant. Mrs. Myles was very kind. It seems to me rather a fuss about nothing, but of course you know best."

Little Dulcie saw her father looking vexed; she climbed up his leg and got on his knee, and put her round, soft cheek against his. "Sall I luboo?" said she.

CHAPTER V.

BLUNDERBORE AND HIS TWO HEADS.

WHEN Jack went to see his *protégé* next day, he found the old man sitting up in the bar warming his toes, and finishing off a basin of gruel and a tumbler of porter with which the landlady had supplied him. Mrs. Penfold was a frozen sort of woman, difficult to deal with, but kind-hearted when the thaw once set in; and though at first she had all but refused to receive poor old Davy into her house, once having relented and opened her door to him; she had warmed and comforted him, and brought him to life in triumph, and now looked upon him with a certain self-contained pride and satisfaction as a favorable specimen of her art.

"He's right eno'," said Mrs. Penfold, with a jerk of the head. "Ye can go in and see him in the bar." And Jack went in.

The bar was a comfortable little oaken refuge and haven for Miles and Hodge, where they stretched their stiff legs' safe from the scoldings of their wives and the shrill cries of their children. The shadows of the sunny-latticed window struck upon the wooden floor, the fire burnt most part of the year on the stone hearth, where the dry branches and logs were crackling cheerfully, with a huge black kettle hissing upon the bars. Some one had christened it "Tom," and from its crooked old spout at any hour of the day a hot and sparkling stream went flowing into the smoking grog-glasses, and into Penfold's punch-pots and Mrs. Penfold's teacups and soup-pans.

Davy's story was a common one enough, — a travelling umbrella-mender — hard times — fine weather, no umbrellas to mend, and "parasols aint no good; so cheap they are," he said, with a shake of the head; "they aint worth the mendin'." Then an illness, and then the workhouse, and that was all his history.

"I aint sorry I come out of the 'ouse; the ditch was the best place of the two," said Davy. "You picked me out of the ditch; you'd have left me in the 'ouse, sir,

all along with the ruck. I don't blame ye," Davy said; "I sec'd ye there for the first time when I was wuss off than I ever hope to be in this life again; ye looked me full in the face, and talked on with them two after ye,—devil take them, and he will."

"I don't remember you," said John. "Where was it?"

"Hammersley work'us," said Davy. "Don't you remember Hammersley Union? I was in the bed under the winder, and I says to my pardner (there were two on us), says I, — 'That chap looks as if he might do us a turn.' 'Not he,' says my pardner. 'They are werry charitable, and come and stare at us; that's all,' says he; and he was right you see, sir. He'd been in five years come Christmas, and knew more about it than I did then."

"And you have left it now?" said Trevithic, with a strange expression of pity in his face.

"So I 'ave, sir, I'm bound to say," said Davy, finishing off his porter, "and I'd rather die in the ditch any day than go back to that d—— place."

"It looked clean and comfortable enough," said Trevithic.

"Clean, comf'ble!" said Davy. "Do you think I minds a little dirt, sir? Did you look under the quilts? Why, the vermin was a-running all over the place like flies, so it were. It come dropping from the ceiling; and my pardner he were paralytic, and he used to get me to wipe the bugs off his face, with a piece of paper. Shall I tell ye what it was like?" And old Davy, in his ire, began a history so horrible, so sickening, that Trevithic flushed up as he listened,—an honest flush and fire of shame and indignation.

"I tell you fairly I don't believe half you say," said Jack, at last. "It is too horrible and unnatural."

"True there," said Davy, comforted by his porter and his gruel. "It aint no great matter to me if you believes 'alf or not, sir. I'm out of that hole, and I aint-a-goin' back. Maybe your good lady has an umbrella wants seeing to; shall I call round and ask this afternoon, sir?"

Jack nodded and said he might come if he liked, and went home, thinking over the history he had heard. It was one of all the histories daily told in the sunshine, of deeds done in darkness. It was one grain of seed falling into the ground and taking root. Jack felt a dull feeling of shame and sadness; an uncomfortable pricking as of a

conscience which had been benumbed; a sudden pain of remorse, as he walked along the dusty lane which led to the vicarage. He found his wife in the drawing-room, writing little scented notes to some of her new friends, and accepting proffered dinners and teas and county hospitalities. Little Dulcie was lying on her back on a rug, and crooning and chattering; the shutters were closed; there was a whiff of roses and scented water coming in from the baking lanes. It was a pretty home-picture, all painted in cool whites and grays and shadows, and yet it had by degrees grown intolerable to him. Jack looked round, and up and down, and then with a sudden impulse he went up and took his wife's hand, and looked her full in the face. "Anne," he said, "could you give up something for me — something, everything, except what is yours as a right? Dear, it is all so nice, but I am very unhappy here. May I give up this pretty home, and will you come and live with me where we can be of more use than we are here?" He looked so kind and so imploring that for an instant Anne almost gave way and agreed to anything. There was a bright constraining power in Jack's blue eye which had to deal with magnetism, I believe, and which his wife was one of the few people to resist. She recovered herself almost immediately.

"How ridiculous you are, John!" she said, pettishly. "Of course I will do anything in reason; but it seems to me very wrong and unnatural and ungrateful of you," said Mrs. Trevithic, encouraging herself as she went on, "not to be happy when you have so much to be thankful for; and though, of course, I should be the last to allude to it, yet I do think when I have persuaded papa to appoint you to this excellent living, considering how young you are and how much you owe to him, it is not *graceful*, to say the least, on your part"

John turned away and caught up little Dulcie, and began tossing her in the air. "Well," said he, "we won't discuss this now. I have made up my mind to take a week's holiday," he added, with a sort of laugh. "I am going to stay with Frank Austin till Saturday. Will you tell them to pack up my things?"

"But, my dear, we are engaged to the Kidd"

"You must write and make my excuses," Jack said, wearily. "I must go. I have some busness at Hammersley." And he left the room.

Chances turn out so strangely at times that some people — women especially, who live quietly at home and speculate upon small matters — look on from afar and wonder among themselves as they mark the extraordinary chain-work of minute stitches by which the mighty machinery of the world works on. Men who are busy and about, here and there in life, are more apt to take things as they find them, and do not stop to speculate how this or that comes to be.

It struck Jack oddly when he heard from his friend Frank Austin that the chaplain who had been elected instead of him at the workhouse was ill and obliged to go away for a time. "He is trying to find some one to take his place, and to get off for a holiday," said Mr. Austin. "He is a poor sort of creature, and I don't think he has got on very well with the guardians."

"I wonder," said Trevithic, "whether I could take the thing for a time? We might exchange, you know; I am tired of play, heaven knows. There is little enough to do at Featherston, and he might easily look after my flock while I take the work here off his hands."

"I know you always had a hankering after those unsavory flesh-pots," Austin said, with a laugh. "I should think Skipper would jump at your offer, and from all I hear there is plenty to be done here, if it is work you are in want of. Poor little Skipper did his best at one time. I believe he tried to collect a fund for some of the poor creatures who couldn't be taken in; but what is one small fish like him among so many guardians?" said Mr. Austin, indulging in one of those clerical jokes to which Mr. Trollope has alluded in his delightful *Chronicles*.

Jack wrote off to his bishop and to his wife by that day's post. Two different answers reached him; his wife's came next day, his bishop's three days later.

Poor Anne was frantic, as well she might be. "Come to Hammersley for two months in the heat of the summer; bring little Dulcie; break up her home! — Never! Throw over Lady Kidderminster's Saturdays; admit a stranger to the vicarage! — Never! Was her husband out of his senses?" She was deeply, deeply hurt. He must come back immediately, or more serious consequences than he imagined might ensue.

Trevithic's eyes filled up with tears as he crumpled the note up in his hand and flung it across the room. It was for this he had

sacrificed the hope of his youth, of his life, — for this. It was too late now to regret, to think of what another fate might have been. Marriage had done him this cruel service: it had taught what happiness might be, what some love might be; but it had withheld the sweetness of the fruit of the tree of life, and only disclosed the knowledge of good and of evil to this unhappy Adam outside the gates of the garden.

Old Mr. Bellingham did not mend matters by writing a trembling and long-winded remonstrance. Lady Kidderminster, to whom Anne had complained, pronounced Trevithic mad; she had had some idea of the kind, she said, that day when he behaved in that extraordinary manner in the lane.

"It's a benevolent mania," said Lord Axminster, her eldest son.

Mrs. Myles shook her head, and began, "He is not mad, most noble lady. . . ." Mrs. Trevithic, who was present, flushed up with resentment at Mrs. Myles venturing to quote Scripture in Jack's behalf. She did not look over-pleased when Mrs. Myles added that she should see Mr. Trevithic probably when she went to stay at Hammersley with her cousin, Mrs. Garnier, and would certainly go and see him at his work.

Jack, who was in a strange, determined mood, meanwhile wrote back to his wife to say that he felt that it was all very hard upon her; that he asked it from her goodness to him and her wisely love; that he would make her very happy if she would only consent to come, and if not she must go to her father's for a few weeks until he had got this work done. "Indeed, it is no sudden freak, dear," he wrote. "I had it in my mind before" — (John hesitated here for a minute and took his pen off the paper) — "that eventful day when I walked up to the rector, and saw you and learned to know you." So he finished his sentence. But his heart sank as he posted the letter. Ah me! he had dreamed a different dream.

If his correspondence with his wife did not prosper as it should have done, poor Trevithic was greatly cheered by the bishop's letter, which not only gave consent to this present scheme, but offered him, if he wished for more active duty, the incumbency of St. Bigots in the North, which would shortly be vacant in Hammersley,

and which, although less valuable than his present living as far as the income was concerned, was much more so as regards the souls to be saved, which were included in the bargain.

New brooms sweep clean, says the good old adage. After he took up his residence at St. Magdalene's, Jack's broomstick did not begin to sweep for seven whole days. He did not go back to Featherston; Anne had left for Sandsea; and Mr. Skipper was in possession of the rectory, and Trevithic was left in that of 500 paupers in various stages of misery and decrepitude, and of a two-headed creature called Bulcox, otherwise termed the master and the matron of the place. Jack waited; he felt that if he began too soon he might ruin everything, get into trouble, stir up the dust, which had been lying so thickly, and make matters worse than before; he waited, watched, looked about him, asked endless questions, to not one of which the poor folks dared give a truthful answer. "Nurse was werry kind, that she was, and most kinsiderate, up any time o' night and day," gasped poor wretches, whose last pinch of tea had just been violently appropriated by "nurse" with the fierce eyebrows sitting over the fire, and who would lie for hours in an agony of pain before they dared awaken her from her weary sleep. For nurse, whatever her hard, rapacious heart might be, was only made of the same aching bones and feeble flesh as the rest of them. "Everybody was kind and good, and the mistress came round reg'lar and ast them what they wanted. The tea was not so nice perhaps as it *might* be, but they was not wishin' to complain." So they moaned on for the first three days. On the fourth one or two cleverer and more truthful than the rest began to whisper that "nurse" sometimes indulged in a drop too much; that she had been very unmanageable the night before, had boxed poor Tilly's ears — poor simpleton! They all loved Tilly, and didn't like to see her hurt. See, there was the bruise on her cheek, and Tilly, a woman of thirty, but a child in her ways, came shyly up in a pinafore, with a doll in one arm and a finger in her mouth. All the old hags sitting on their beds smiled at her as she went along. This poor, witless Tilly was the pet of the ward, and they did not like to have her beaten. Trevithic was affected; he brought Tilly some sugar-plums in his pocket, and the old toothless crones

brightened up and thanked him, nodding their white night-caps encouragingly from every bed. Meanwhile John sickened; the sights, the smells, the depression of spirits produced by this vast suffering mass of his unlucky brothers and sisters, was too much for him, and for a couple of days he took to his bed. The matron came to see him twice; she took an interest in this cheerful new element, sparkling still with full reflection of the world outside. She glanced admiringly at his neatly appointed dressing-table, the silver top to his shaving-gear, and the ivory brushes.

John was feverish and thirsty, and was draining a bottle of murky-looking water when Mrs. Bulcox came into the room. "What is that you are drinking there, sir?" said she. "My goodness, it's the water from the tap,—we never touch it! I'll send you some of ours; the tap-water comes through the cesspool and is as nasty as nasty can be."

"Is it what they habitually drink here?" Trevithic asked, languidly.

"They're used to it," said Mrs. Bulcox; "nothing hurts them."

Jack turned away with an impatient movement, and Mrs. Bulcox went off indignant at his want of courtesy. The fact was, that Jack already knew more of the Bulcox's doings than they had any conception of, poor wretches, as they lay snoring the comfortable sleep of callousness on their snug pillows. "I don't 'alf like that chap," Mr. Bulcox had remarked to his wife, and Mrs. Bulcox had heartily echoed the misgiving. "I go to see him when he is ill," said she; "and he cuts me off as sharp as anything. What business has he comin' prying and spying about the place?"

What indeed! The place oppressed poor Jack, tossing on his bed: it seemed to close in upon him; the atmosphere appeared to be full of horrible moans and suggestions. In his normal condition Jack would have gone to sleep like a top, done his best, troubled his head no more on the subject of troubles he could not relieve; but just now he was out of health, out of spirits, — although his darling desire was his, — and more susceptible to nervous influences and suggestions than he had ever been in his life before. This night especially he was haunted and overpowered by the closeness and stillness of his room. It looked out through bars into a narrow street, and a nervous feeling of imprisonment and helplessness came over

him so strongly that, to shake it off, he jumped up at last and partly dressed himself, and began to pace up and down the room. The popular history of Jack the Giant-Killer gives a ghastly account of the abode of Blunderbore; it describes "an immense room where lay the limbs of the people lately seized and devoured," and Blunderbore "with a horrid grin" telling Jack "that men's hearts eaten with pepper and vinegar were his nicest food. The giant then locked Jack up," says the history, "and went to fetch a friend."

Poor Trevithic felt something in Jack's position when the gates were closed for the night, and he found himself shut in with his miserable companions. He could from his room hear the bolts and the bars and the grinding of the lock, and immediately a longing would seize him to get out.

To-night, after pacing up and down, he at last took up his hat and a light in his hand, and opened his door and walked downstairs to assure himself of his liberty and get rid of this oppressive feeling of confinement. He passed the master's door and heard his snores, and then he came to the lower door opening into the inner court. The keys were in it — it was locked on the inside. As Jack came out into the courtyard he gave a great breath of relief; the stars were shining thickly overhead, very still, very bright; the place seemed less God-forgotten than when he was up there in his bedroom; the fresh night-air blew in his face and extinguished his light. He did not care, he put it down in a corner by the door, and went on into the middle of the yard and looked all round about him. Here and there from some of the windows a faint light was burning and painting the bars in gigantic shadows upon the walls; and at the end of the court, from what seemed like a grating to a cellar, some dim rays were streaming upward. Trevithic was surprised to see a light in such a place, and he walked up to see, and then he turned quickly away, and if, like Uncle Toby, he swore a great oath at the horrible sight he saw, it was but an expression of honest pity and most Christian charity. The grating was a double grating and looked into two cellars which were used as casual wards when the regular ward was full. The sight Trevithic saw is not one that I can describe here. People have read of such things as they are, and were only a little while ago when the *Pall Mall Gazette* first published that terrible account which set people talk-

ing and asking whether such things should be and could be still.

Old Davy had told him a great many sad and horrible things, but they were not so sad or so horrible as the truth, as Jack now saw it. Truth, naked, alas! covered with dirt and vermin, shuddering with cold, moaning with disease, and heaped and tossed in miserable, uneasy sleep at the bottom of her foul well. Every now and then a voice broke the darkness, or a cough or a moan reached him from the sleepers above. Jack did not improve his night's rest by his midnight wandering.

Trevithic got well, however, next day, dressed himself, and went down into the little office which had been assigned to him. His bedroom was over the gateway of the workhouse and looked into the street. From his office he had only a sight of the men's court, the wooden bench, the stone steps, the grating. Inside was a stove and green drugget, a little library of books covered with greasy brown paper for the use of those who could read. There was not much to comfort or cheer him, and as he sat there he began to think a little disconsolately of his pleasant home, with its clean, comfortable appointments, the flowers round the window, the fresh chintzes, and, above all, the dear little round face upturned to meet him at every coming home.

It would not do to think of such things, and Jack put them away, but he wished that Anne had consented to come to him. It seemed hard to be there alone, — him a father and a husband, with belongings of his own. Trevithic, who was still weak and out of sorts, found himself making a little languid castle in the air, of crooked places made straight, of whitened sepulchres made clean, of Dulcie, grown tall and sensible, coming tapping at his door to cheer him when he was sad, and encourage him when he was weary.

Had the fever come back, and could it be that he was wandering? It seemed to him that all the heads of the old men he could see through the grating were turning, and that an apparition was passing by, — an apparition, gracious, smiling, looking in through the bars of his window, and coming gently knocking at his door; and then it opened, and a low voice said, — "It's me, Mr. Trevithic, — Mrs. Myles; may I come in?" and a cool, gray phantom stepped into the dark little room. "How ill you are looking!" Mrs. Myles said, compassion-

ately. "I came to ask you to come back and dine with us; I am only here for a day or two with my cousin Fanny Garnier. She visits this place and brought me, and I thought of asking for you; and do come, Mr. Trevithic. These—these persons showed me the way to your study." And she looked back at the grinning old heads that were peeping in at the door. Mary Myles looked like the lady in *Comus*,—so sweet, and pure, and fair, with the grotesque faces, peering and whispering all about her. They vanished when Trevithic turned, and stood behind the door watching and chattering like apes for the pretty lady to come out again. "I cannot tell you how glad we are that you have come here, Mr. Trevithic," said Mrs. Myles. "Poor Fanny has half broken her heart over the place, and Mr. Skipper was so hopeless that it was no use urging him to appeal. You will do more good in a week than he has done in a year. I must not wait now," Mrs. Myles added. "You will come, won't you?—at seven; we have so much to say to you. Here is the address."

As soon as Jack had promised to come, she left him, disappearing with her strange little court hobbling after her to the very gate of the dreary place.

Jack was destined to have more than one visitor that afternoon. As he still sat writing busily at his desk in the little office, a tap came at the door. It was a different apparition this time, for an old woman's head peeped in, and an old nutcracker-looking body, in her charity-girl's livery, staggered feebly into his office and stood grinning slyly at him. "She came to borrow a book," she said. "She couldn't read, not she, but, law bless him, that was no matter." Then she hesitated. "He had been speaking to Mike Rogers that morning. You wouldn't go and get us into trouble," said the old crone, with a wistful, doubtful, scanning interrogation of the eyes; "but I am his good lady, and 'ave been these thirty years, and it do seem hard upon the gals, and if you could speak the word, sir, and get them out."

"Out?" said Jack.

"From the black kitchen,—so they name it," said the old crone, mysteriously; "the cellar under the master's stairs. Kate Hill has been in and out a week come yesterday. I knowed her grandmother, poor soul. She shouldn't have spoke tighty to the missis; but she is young and don't know no better,

and my good man and me was thinking if maybe you could say a word, sir,—as if from yourself. Maybe you heard her as you went upstairs, sir; for we know our cries is 'eard."

So this was it. The moans in the air were not fancy, the complainings had been the real complaints of some one in suffering and pain.

"Here is the book," said Jack, suddenly; "and I'm afraid you can have no more snuff, ma'am." And with a start poor old Betty Rogers nearly stumbled over the matron, who was standing at his door.

"Well, what is it you're wanting now?" said Mrs. Bulcox. "You mustn't allow them to come troubling you, Mr. Trevithic."

"I am not here for long, Mrs. Bulcox," said Jack, shrugging his shoulders. "While I stay I may as well do all I can for these poor creatures."

A gleam of satisfaction came into Mrs. Bulcox's face at the notion of his approaching departure. He had been writing all the morning, covering sheets and sheets of paper. He had been doing no harm, and she felt she could go out for an hour with her Bulcox, with an easy mind.

As Mr. and Mrs. Bulcox came home together, Jack, who was looking from his bedroom window, saw them walking up the street. He had put up his sheets of paper in an envelope, and stamped it, and addressed it. He had not wasted his time during their absence, and he had visited a part of the workhouse unknown to him before, having bribed one pauper and frightened another into showing him the way. Mr. Bulcox coming under the window heard Jack calling to him affably. "Would you be so kind as to post this packet for me?" cried Jack. The post-box was next door to the workhouse. "Thank you," he said, as Mr. Bulcox picked up the thick letter which came falling to the ground at his feet. It was addressed to Colonel the Hon. Charles Hambledon, Lowndes Square, London. "Keeps very 'igh company," said Bulcox to his wife, and he felt quite pleased to post a letter addressed to so distinguished a personage.

"Thank you," said Jack again, looking very savagely pleased and amused; "it was of importance." He did not add that it was a letter to the editor of the *Jupiter*, who was a friend of his friend's. Trevithic liked the notion of having got Bulcox to fix

the noose round his own neck. He felt ashamed of the part he was playing, but he did not hurry himself for that. It was necessary to know all, in order to sweep clean once, he began. Poor Kate Hill still in durance received a mysterious and encouraging message, and one or two comforts were smuggled in to her by her gaoler.

On the Wednesday morning his letter would appear in the *Jupiter*—nothing more could be done until then. Next day was Tuesday; he would go over to Sandsea and talk Anne into reason, and get back in time for the board; and in the mean time Jack dressed himself and went to dine with the widows.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PARCE CUT A THREAD OF MRS TREVITHIC'S KNITTING.

Mrs. Myles' cousin, Mrs. Garnier, lived in a quaint, comfortable-looking low house on the Chester high-road, with one or two bow-windows and gables standing out for no apparent reason, and a gallery upstairs, with four or five windows, which led to the drawing-room.

The two widows were very fond of one another and often together; there was a similarity in tastes and age and circumstance. The chief difference in their fate had been this,—that Fanny Garnier had loved her husband, although she could not agree with him,—for loving and agreeing do not go together always,—and Mary Myles' married life had been at best a struggle for indifference and forgiveness; she was not a very easily moulded woman; she could do no more than forgive and repent her own ill-doing in marrying as she did.

The trace of their two lives was set upon the cousins. A certain coldness and self-reliance, a power of living for to-day and forgetting, was the chief gift that had come to Mary Myles out of the past experience of her life. Fanny Garnier was softer, more impressionable, more easily touched and assimilated by the people with whom she came in contact; she was less crisp and bright than Mary, and older, though she was the same age. She had loved more and sorrowed more; and people remember their sorrows in after years, when their angers are forgotten and have left only a blank in their minds.

George Garnier, Fanny Garnier's hus-

band, had belonged to that sect of people who have an odd fancy in their world for making themselves and other folks as miserable as they possibly can,—for worrying and wearying and torturing, for doubting and trembling, for believing far more eagerly in justice (or retribution, which is their idea of justice) than in mercy. Terror has a strange, morbid attraction for these folks. Mistrust, for all they say, seems to be the motive power of their lives; they gladly offer pain and tears and penitence as a ghastly propitiation. They are of all religions and creeds. They are found with black skins and woolly heads, building up their altars, and offering their human sacrifices in the unknown African deserts; they are chipping and chopping themselves before their emerald-nosed idols, who sit squatting in unclean temples; they are living in the streets and houses all round about us; in George Garnier's pleasant old cottage outside the great Hammersley city, or at Number five, and six, and seven, in our street, as the case may be; in the convent at Bayswater; in the manses and presbyteries. You or I may belong to the fraternity; so did many a better man, as the children say,—St. Simon Stylites, Athanasius, John Calvin, Milton, Ignatius Loyola, Savonarola, not to speak of Saints A, B, C, D, and E.

Mary poured Jack out a big cup of strong tea, and brought it across the lamp-lit room to him with her own white hands. Mrs. Garnier shivered as she heard his story. The tea smoked, the lamps burnt among the flower-stands; the wood-fire blazed cheerfully; for Mrs. Myles was a chilly and weak-minded person, and lit her fire all the year round, more or less. Trevithic, comfortably sunk back in a big arm-chair, felt a grateful sense of ease and rest and consolation. The atmosphere of the little house was so congenial and fragrant; the two women were such sympathizing listeners; Mary Myles' bright eyes lighted with such kindly interest; while Mrs. Garnier, silent, available, sat with her knitting under the shade of the lamp. The poor fellow was not insensible to these soothing influences. As he talked on, it seemed to him that for the first time in his life he had realized what companionship and sympathy might mean. Something invisible, harmonious, delicate, seemed to drive away from him all thought of sin or misery and turmoil, when in company with these two kind women. This was what a home might have

been,—a warm, flower-scented, lamp-twinkling haven, with sweet, still eyes to respond and brighten at his success, and to cheer his failing efforts. This was what it never, never would be, and Trevithic put the thought away. It was dangerous ground for the poor, heart-weary fellow, longing for peace and home, comfort and love; whereas Anne, to whom he was bound to look for these good things, was at Sandsea, fulfilling every duty of civilized life, and not greatly troubled for her husband, but miserable on her own account, hard and vexed and deeply offended.

Mrs. Trevithic was tripping along the south cliff on the afternoon of the next day, when the sound of footsteps behind her made her stop and look round. As she saw that it was her husband coming towards her, her pale face turned a shade more pale.

"Oh, how d'ye do?" Anne said. "I did not expect you. Have you come for long?" And she scarcely waited for him to come up to her, but began to walk on immediately.

Poor John! what a coming home! He arrived with his various interests, his reforms, his forthcoming letter in the *Jupiter*; there was the offer of the bishop's in his pocket,—the momentary gladness and elation of return,—and this was all he had come back to!

"Have you come on business?" Mrs. Trevithic asked.

"I wanted to see you and Dulcie," John answered; "that was my business. Time seems very long without you both. All this long time I have had only Mrs. Myles to befriend me. I wish—I wish you would try to like the place, Anne. The two ladies seem very happy there."

"Mrs. Myles, I have no doubt," said Anne, bitterly. "No," she cried, "you need not talk so to me. I know too much, too much, too much," she said, with something like real pathos in her voice.

"My dearest Anne, what do you mean?" Trevithic said, kindly, hurrying after her, for she was walking very fast.

"It is too late. I cannot forgive you. I am not one of those people who can forget easily and forgive. Do you think I do not know that your love is not mine,—never was, never will be mine? Do you think gossip never reaches me here, far away, though I try to live in peace and away from it all? And you dare mention Mary Myles' name to me—*you dare—* you dare!" cried Anne, in her quick, fierce manner,

"Of course I dare," said Trevithic. "Enough of this, Anne," and he looked as hard as Anne herself for a minute; then he melted. "Dear Anne, if something has failed in our home, hitherto, let us forgive one another, and make a new start in life. Listen;" and he pulled out the bishop's letter and read it to her. "I need not tell you how much I wish for this."

His wife did not answer. At first he thought she was relenting. She went a little way down the side of the cliff and waited for him, and then suddenly turned upon him. The wash of the sea seemed to flow in time with her words.

"You are cruel,—yes, cruel!" said Anne, trembling very much, and moved for once out of her calm. "You think I can bear anything. I cannot bear your insults any longer! I must go,—leave you. Yes, listen to me, I *will* go, I tell you! My father will keep me here, me and little Dulcie, and you can have your own way, John, and go where you like. You love your own way better than anything else in the world, and it will make up to you for the home which, as you say, has been a failure on the whole." And Mrs. Trevithic tried to choke down a gulp of bitter, angry tears.

As she spoke John remembered a time, not so very long ago, when Anne had first sobbed out she loved him, and when the tears which she should have gulped away had been allowed to overflow into those bitter waters of strife—alas! neither of them could have imagined possible until now.

They had been walking side by side along the beach, the parson trudging angrily a little ahead, with his long black coat flapping and swinging against his legs; Anne skimming along skilfully after him, with her quick, slender footsteps; but, as she went along, she blamed him in her heart for every roughness and inequality of the shore, and once when she struck her foot against a stone, her ire rose sore against him. Little Dulcie from the rectory garden spied them out afar off, and pointed and capered to attract their attention; but the father and mother were too much absorbed in their own troubles to heed her, even if they could have descried her small person among the grasses and trees.

"You mean to say," said Jack, stopping short suddenly, and turning round and speaking with a faint discordant jar in his voice, "that you want to leave me, Anne?"

"Yes," said Anne, quite calm and com-

posed, with two glowing cheeks that alone showed that a fire of some sort was smouldering within. "Yes, John, I mean it. I have not been happy. I have not succeeded in making you happy. I think we should both be better people apart than together. I never, never felt so—so ashamed of myself in all my life as since I have been married to you. I will stay here with papa. You have given up your living; you can now go and fulfil those duties which are more to you than wife or children or home." Anne—who was herself again by this time—calmly rolled up her parasol as she spoke, and stood waiting for an answer. I think she expected a tender burst of remonstrance from her husband, a pathetic appeal, an abandonment possibly of the mad scheme which filled her with such unspeakable indignation. She had not counted on his silence. John stopped short a second time, and stood staring at the sea. He was cut to the heart; cruelly stunned, and shocked, and wounded by the pain, so that he had almost forgotten his wife's presence, or what he should say, or anything but the actual suffering that he was enduring. It seemed like a revelation of a horrible secret to which he had been blind all along. It was like a curse falling upon his home—undreamt of for a time, and suddenly realized. A great, swift hatred flamed up in his heart against the calm and passive creature who had wrought it,—who was there before him waiting for his assent to her excellent arrangements; a hatred, indeed, of which she was unworthy and unconscious; for Anne was a woman of slow perception. It took a long time for her to realize the effect of her words, or to understand what was passing in other people's minds. She was not more annoyed now with Trevithic than she had been for a long time past. She had no conception of the furies of scorn and hatred which were battling and tearing at the poor fellow's kind heart; she had not herself begun to respond even to her own emotions; and so she stood quite quietly, expecting, like some stupid bird by the water's edge, waiting for the wave to overwhelm her. "Do you not agree with me?" she said at last. Trevithic was roused by his wife's question, and answered it. "Yes; just as you wish," he said, in an odd, cracked voice, with a melancholy jar in it. "Just as you like, Anne." And without looking at her again, he began once more to tramp along the shingle, crushing the pebbles under his feet as he

went. The little stones started and rolled away under his impatient tread. Anne from habit followed him, without much thinking where she was going, or what aim she had in so doing; but she could not keep up with his strong progress,—the distance widened and widened between them. John walked farther away, while Mrs. Trevithic following after, trying in vain to hasten her lagging steps, grew sad and frightened all at once as she saw him disappearing in the distance. Her feet failed, her heart sank, her courage died away all suddenly. Like a flame blown out, all the fire of her vexation and impatience was gone, and only a dreary nothing remained. And more hard to bear even than the troubles, the pains, the aches, the longings of life, are its blanks and its wants. Outer darkness, with the tormenting fires and the companion devils, is not the outer darkness that has overwhelmed strong hearts with terror and apprehension. No words, no response, silence, abandonment,—to us weak, loving, longing human creatures, that is the worst fate of all.

Anne became very tired, struggling after Trevithic. A gull flapped across her path, and frightened her. Little by little she began to realize that she had sent him away, and he was going. She could see him still; he had not yet turned up the steps from the cliff to the rectory garden, but he was gone as certainly as if she could no longer see him. And then she began to learn in a void of incredulous amaze, poor, sluggish soul, that life was hard, very hard, and terribly remorseless; that when you strike, the blow falls; that what you wish is not always what you want; that it is easy to call people to you once perhaps, and to send them away once, but that when they come they stay, and when they go they are gone, and all is over. Why was he so headstrong, so ungrateful, so unreasonable? Was she not right to blame him? and had he not owned himself to be in the wrong? Ah, poor wife, poor wife! Something choking and blinding seemed to smite the unhappy woman in her turn. She reached the steps at last that lead up the cliff to the rectory garden, where little Dulcie had been playing when her mother left her. Anne longed to find her there,—to clutch her in her poor aching arms, and cover her sweet little rosy face with kisses. "Dulcie," she called, "Dulcie, Dulcie!" her voice echoing so sadly that it struck herself, but Dulcie's cheery little scream of gladness did not an-

swer, and Anne—who took this silence as a bad omen—felt her heart sink lower. In a dim way, she felt that if she could have met Dulcie, all would have been well.

She was calling still, when some one answered; figures came to the hall door, half-a-dozen officious hands were outstretched, and friendly greetings met her. There was Miss Triquett who was calling with Miss Moineaux, and Miss Simmonds, who had driven up in her basket-carriage, and old Mr. Bellingham trying in a helpless way to entertain his visitresses, and to make himself agreeable to them all. The old gentleman, much relieved at the sight of his daughter, called her to him with a cheerful, "Ah, my dear, here you are. I shall now leave these ladies in better hands than mine. I am sorry to say I have a sermon to write." And Mr. Bellingham immediately and benevolently trotted away.

With the curious courage of women, and long habitude, Mrs. Trevithic took off her hat and smoothed her straight hair, and sat down, and mechanically began to make conversation for the three old ladies, who established themselves comfortably in the pleasant bow-windowed drawing-room, and prepared for a good chat. Miss Simmonds took the sofa as her right (as I have said before, size has a certain precedence of its own). Miss Triquett, as usual, rapidly glanced round the apartment, took in the importation of work-boxes, baskets, toy-boxes, etc., which Anne's arrival had scattered about, the tripping on Mrs. Trevithic's dress, the worn lines under her eyes. Mrs. Trevithic took her knitting from one of the baskets, and rang the bell and desired the man to find Miss Dulcie and send her; and meanwhile the stream of conversation flowed on uninterruptedly. Mr. Trevithic was well. Only come for a day! And the little girl?

Thanks—yes. Little Dulcie's cold had been severe—linseed poultices, squills, ipecacuanha wine;—thanks, yes. Mrs. Trevithic was already aware of their valuable medicinal properties. Mr. Pelligrew, the present curate, had sprained his thumb in the pulpit door—wet bandages, etc., etc. Here Miss Simmonds, whose eyes had been fixed upon the window all this time, suddenly exclaimed,—

"How fond your husband is of that dear child Dulcie, Mrs. Trevithic! There she is with her papa in the garden."

"Dear me!" said Triquett, stretching her long neck and lighting up with excitement. "Mr. Trevithic must be going away; you never told us. He is carrying a carpet-bag."

As she spoke, Anne, who had been sitting with her back to the window, started up, and her knitting fell off her lap. She was irresolute for an instant. He could not be going—going like that, without a word. No, she would not go to him.

"O dear me!" said Miss Simmonds, who had been trying to hook up the little rolling balls of worsted with the end of her parasol, "just see what I have done." And she held it up spindle fashion, with the long thread twisted round it and hooked.

"I think I can undo it," said Miss Moineaux.

"I beg your pardon, I—I want to speak to my husband," said Mrs. Trevithic, starting up and running to the door.

"He is gone," said Miss Triquett to the others, looking once more out through the big, pleasant window. "Dear Miss Moineaux, into what a mess you have got that knitting,—let me cut the thread."

"Poor thing, she is too late," said Miss Moineaux, letting the two ends of the hread fall to the ground.

JACK THE GIANT-KILLER.

PART THIRD.

JACK THE GIANT-KILLER.

PART III.

CHAPTER VII.

IN BLUNDERBORE'S CASTLE.

WHEN Jack first made the acquaintance of the board on the Wednesday after he first came to the workhouse, the seven or eight gentlemen sitting round the green table greeted him quite as one of themselves as he came into the room. This was a dull September morning; the mist seemed to have oozed in through the high window and continually opening door. When Jack passed through the outer or entrance room, he saw a heap of wistful faces and rags already waiting for admittance, some women, and some children, a man with an arm in a sling, one or two workhouse *habitués*, — there was no mistaking the hard, coarse faces. Two old paupers were keeping watch at the door, and officiously flung it open for him to pass in. The guardians had greeted him very affably on the previous occasion, — a man of the world, a prosperous but eccentric vicar, was not to be treated like an every-day curate and chaplain. "Ah, how-d'y-e-do, Mr. Trevithic?" said the half-pay Captain, the chairman. The gas-fitter cleared his throat, and made a sort of an attempt at a bow. The wholesale grocer rubbed his two hands together, — Pitchley his name was I think, — for some reason or other, he exercised great influence over the rest. But on this eventful Wednesday morning the "Jupiter" had come out with this astounding letter, — about themselves, their workhouse, their master, their private paupers. It was a day they never forgot, and the natural indignation of the board overflowed.

Perhaps Jack would have done better had he first represented matters to them, but he knew that at least two of the guardians were implicated. He was afraid of being silenced and of having the affair hushed up. He cared not for the vials of their wrath being emptied upon him so long as they cleansed the horrible place in their outpour.

He walked in quite brisk and placid to meet the storm. The guardians had not all seen the "Jupiter" as they came dropping in. Oker, the gas-man, was late, and so was Pitchley as it happened, and when they arrived Jack was already standing in his pillory and facing the indignant chairman.

"My friend Colonel Hambledon wrote the letter from notes which I gave him," said Jack. "I considered publicity best; — under the circumstances, I could not be courteous," he said, "if I hoped to get through this disagreeable business at all effectually. I could not have selected any one of you gentlemen as confidants in common fairness to others. I wished the inquiry to be complete and searching. I was obliged to brave the consequences."

"Upon my word I think you have acted right," said one of the guardians, a doctor, a bluff old fellow who liked frank speaking. But an indignant murmur expressed the dissent of the other members of the board.

"I have been here a fortnight," said Jack. "I had not intended speaking so soon of what I now wish to bring before your notice; but the circumstances seem to me so urgent and so undoubted, that I can see no necessity for deferring my complaint any longer."

"Dear me, sir," said the gas-fitter, "I 'ope there's nothink wrong?"

"Everything, more or less," said Trevithic, quietly. "In the first place, I wish to bring before you several cases of great neglect on the part of Mr. and Mrs. Bulcox."

Here the chairman colored up. "I think, Mr. Trevithic, we had better have the master present if you have any complaint to lodge against him."

"By all means," said Trevithic, impassively, and he turned over his notes while one of the trembling old messengers went off for the master.

The master arrived and the matron too. "How-d'y-e-do, Bulcox?" said the chairman. Mrs. Bulcox dropped a respectful sort of courtesy, and Trevithic immediately

began without giving time for the others to speak. He turned upon the master.

"I have a complaint to lodge against you and Mrs. Bulcox, and at the chairman's suggestion I waited for you to be present."

"Against me, sir?" said Bulcox, indignantly.

"Against me and Mr. Bulcox?" said the woman, with a bewildered, injured, saint-like sort of swoop.

"Yes," said Jack.

"Have you seen the letter in the "Jupiter"?" said the chairman gravely to Mr. Bulcox.

"Mr. Bulcox was good enough to post the letter himself," Jack interposed briskly. "It was to state that I consider that you, Mr. Bulcox, are totally unfit for your present situation as master. I am aware that you have good friends among these gentlemen, and that, as far as they can tell, your conduct has always been a model of deference and exemplariness. Now," said Jack, "with the board's permission I will lodge my complaints against you in form." And here Trevithic pulled out his little book and read out as follows:—

"1. That the management and economy of this workhouse are altogether disgraceful.

"2. That you have been guilty of cruelty to two or three of the inmates.

"3. That you have embezzled or misappropriated certain sums of money allowed to you for the relief of the sick paupers under your care."

But here the chairman, guardians, master and mistress, would hear no more; all interrupted Trevithic at once.

"Really, sir, you must substantiate such charges as these. Leave the room" (to the messengers at the door).

"I cannot listen to such imputations," from the master.

"What have we done to you that you should say such cruel, false things?" from the mistress. "O sir" (to the chairman), "say you don't believe him."

"If you will come with me now," Jack continued, "I think I can prove some of my statements. Do you know that the little children here are crying with hunger? Do you know that the wine allowed for the use of the sick has been regularly appropriated by these two wretches?" cried Trevithic, in an honest fury. "Do you know that people here are lying in their beds in misery, at this instant, who have not been moved or touched for weeks and weeks;

that the nurses follow the example of those who are put over them, and drink, and ill-use their patients; that the food is stinted, the tea is undrinkable, the meat is bad and scarcely to be touched; that the very water flows from a foul cesspool; that at this instant, in a cellar in the house, there are three girls shut up, without beds or any conceivable comfort,—one has been there four days and nights; another has been shut up twice in one week in darkness and unspeakable misery? Shall I tell you the crime of this culprit? She spoke saucily to the matron, and this is her punishment. Will you come with me now, and see whether or not I have been speaking the truth?"

There was not one word he could not substantiate. He had not been idle all this time, he had been collecting his proofs,—ghastly proofs they were.

The sight of the three girls brought blinded and staggering out of the cellar had more effect than all the statements and assertions which Mr. Trevithic had been at such great pains to get together. The Bulcoes were doomed; of this there could be no doubt. They felt it themselves as they plodded across the yard with the little mob of excited and curious guardians. Oker, the gas-fitter, took their part indeed; so did the grocer. The old doctor nearly fell upon the culprits then and there. The rest of the guardians seemed to be divided in their indignation against Jack for telling, against Bulcox for being found out, against the paupers for being ill-used, for being paupers; against the reporter for publishing such atrocious libels. It was no bed of roses that Trevithic had made for himself.

A special meeting was convened for the end of the week.

As years go by, and we see more of life and of our fellow-creatures, the by-play of existence is curiously unfolded to us, and we may, if we choose, watch its threads twisting and untwisting, flying apart, and coming together. People rise from their sick-beds, come driving up in carriages, come walking along the street into each other's lives. As A trips along by the garden-wall, Z, at the other end of the world, perhaps, is thinking that he is tired of this solitary bushman's life; he was meant for something better than sheep-shearing and driving convicts, and he says to himself that he will throw it all up and

go back to England, and see if there is not bread enough left in the old country to support one more of her sons. Here, perhaps, A stoops to pick a rose, and places it in her girdle, and wonders whether that is C on the rough pony riding along the road from market. As for Z, A has never even conceived the possibility of his existence. But by this time Z at the other end of the world has made up his mind, being a man of quick and determined action, and poor C's last chance is over, and pretty A, with the rose in her girdle, will never be his. Or it may be that Z, after due reflection, likes the looks of his tallows, X and Y come to the station, which had hitherto only been visited by certain very wild-looking letters of the alphabet, with feathers in their heads, and faces streaked with white paint, and A gives her rose to C, who puts it in his button-hole with awkward country gallantry, quite unconscious of the chance they have both run that morning, and that their fate has been settled for them at the other end of the world.

When my poor Anne burst into tears at the beginning of this story, another woman, who should have been Trevithic's wife, as far as one can judge speaking of such matters, a person who could have sympathized with his ambitions and understood the direction of his impulses, a woman with enough enthusiasm and vigor in her nature to carry her bravely through the tangles and difficulties which only choked and scratched and tired out poor Anne — this person, who was not very far off at the time, and no other than Mary Myles, said to some one who was with her, — and she gave a pretty sad smile and quick shake of the head as she spoke, —

"No, it is no use. I have nothing but friendliness, a horrible, universal feeling of friendliness, left for any of my fellow-creatures. I will confess honestly" (and here she lost her color a little) "I did wrong once. I married my husband for a home; most people know how I was punished and what a miserable home it was. I don't mind telling you, Colonel Hambleton, for you well understand how it is that I must make the best of my life in this arid and lonely waste to which my own fault has brought me."

Mrs. Myles' voice faltered as she spoke, and she hung her head to hide the tears which had come into her eyes. And Colonel Hambleton took this as an answer to a question he had almost asked her, and went

away. "If ever you should change your mind," he said, "you would find me the same a dozen years hence." And Mary only sighed and shook her head.

But all this was years ago, — three years nearly by the Dulcie almanac, — and if Mary Myles sometimes thought she had done foolishly when she sent Charles Hambleton away, there was no one to whom she could own it, — not even to her cousin Fanny, who had no thoughts of marrying or giving in marriage, or wishes for happiness beyond the ordering her garden-beds and the welfare of her poor people.

Fanny one day asked her cousin what had become of her old friend the Colonel. Mary blushed up brightly, and said she did not know; she believed he was in Hammersley. Fanny, who was cutting out little flannel vests for her school-children, was immediately lost in the intricacies of a gore, and did not notice the blush or the bright, amused glance in the quiet gray eyes that were watching her at her benevolent toil. Snip, snip, sni-l-i-l-i-l-ip went the scissors with that triumphant screeching sound which all good housewives love to hear. Mary was leaning back in her chair, perfectly lazy and unoccupied, with her little white hands crossed upon her knees, and her pretty head resting against the chair. She would not have been sorry to have talked a little more upon a subject that was not uninteresting to her, and she tried to make Fanny speak.

"What do you think of him? Have you heard if he has come?" she asked, a little shyly.

"Oh, I don't know. No, I have not seen any of them for a long time," said Fanny, absently. "Mary, are you not ashamed of being so lazy? Come and hold these strips."

Mary did as she was bid, and held out gray flannel strips at arms' length, and watching the scissors flashing, the pins twinkling, and the neat little heaps rising all about on the floor and the chairs and the tables. Then Mrs. Myles tried again. "Mr. Trevithic tells me that Colonel Hambleton is coming down to help him with this workhouse business. You will have to ask them both to dinner, Fanny."

Fanny did not answer for a minute. She hesitated, looked Mary full in the face, and then said very thoughtfully, "Don't you think unbleached calico will be best to line the jackets with? It will keep the children warm, poor little things." The children's

little backs might be warmed by this heap of snips and linings; but Mary suddenly felt as if all the wraps and flannels and calicoes were piled upon her head, and choking and oppressing her, while all the while her heart was cold and shivering, poor thing! There are no flannel jackets that I know of to warm sad hearts such as hers.

Fanny Garnier was folding up the last of her jackets; Mary, after getting through more work in half an hour than Fanny, the methodical, could manage in two, had returned to her big arm-chair, and was leaning back in the old listless attitude, dreaming dreams of her own, as her eyes wandered to the window and followed the line of the trees showing against the sky,—when the door opened, and a stupid country man-servant suddenly introduced Jack, and the Colonel of Mrs. Myles' visionary recollections, in actual person, walking into the very midst of the snippings and parings which were scattered about on the floor. Fanny was in nowise disconcerted. She rather gloried in her occupation. I cannot say so much for Mary, who nervously hated any show or affectation of philanthropy, and who now jumped up hastily, with an exclamation, an outstretched hand, and a blush.

"There seems to be something going on," the Colonel said, standing over a heap of straggling "backs" and "arms."

"Do come upstairs out of this labyrinth of good intentions," cried Mary, hastily. "Fanny, please put down your scissors, and let us go up."

"I'll follow," said Fanny, placidly, and Mary had to lead the way alone to the long low bow-windowed drawing-room which Trevithic knew so well. She had regained her composure and spirits by the time they reached the landing at the top of the low flight of oak steps; and, indeed, both Hambledon and Mrs. Myles were far too much used to the world and its ways to betray to each other the smallest indication of the real state of their minds. Three years had passed since they parted. If Mary's courage had failed then, it was the Colonel's now that was wanting; and so it happens with people late in life,—the fatal gift of experience is theirs. They mistrust, they hesitate, they bargain to the uttermost farthing; the jewel is there, but it is locked up so securely in strong boxes and wrappers, that it is beyond the power of the possessors to reach it. Their youth and simplicity is as much a part of them still as

their placid middle age; but it is hidden away under the years which are heaped upon the past, and its glory is not shining as of old upon their brows. Mrs. Myles and the Colonel, each, were acting a part, and perfectly at ease as they discussed all manner of things that had been since they met, and might be before they met again. Fanny, having folded away the last of her flannels, came up placid and smiling too; and after half an hour the two gentlemen went away. Fanny forgot to ask them to dinner, and wondered why her cousin was so cross all the rest of the afternoon.

No, Mary would not go out. No, she had no headache, thank you. As soon as she had got rid of Fanny and her questionings, Mary Myles ran up to her room and pulled out some old, old papers and diaries, and read the old, tear-stained records till new tears fell to wash away the old ones. Ah, yes, she had done rightly when she sent Hambledon away. Three years ago,—it had seemed to her then that a lifetime of expiation would not be too long to repent of the wrong she had done when she married,—loveless, thrifful, longing (and that, poor soul, had been her one excuse) for the possible love that had never come to her. Life is so long, the time is so slow that passes wearily; she had been married three years, she had worn sackcloth three years; and now,—now if it were not too late, how gladly, how gratefully, she would grasp a hope of some life more complete than the sad one she had led ever since she could remember almost. Would it not be a sign that she had been forgiven if the happiness she had so longed for came to her at last? Mary wondered that her troubles had left no deeper lines upon her face; wondered that she looked so young still, so fair and smiling, while her heart felt so old; and smiled sadly at her own face in the glass.

And then as people do to whom a faint dawn of rising hope shows the darkness in which they have been living, Mrs. Myles began to think of some of her duties that she had neglected of late, and of others still in darkness for whom no dawn was nigh; and, all the while, as people do, whose hearts are full, she was longing for some one to speak to, some one wiser than herself to whom she could say, What is an expiation? Can it, does it exist? Is it the same as repentance? Are we called upon to crush our hearts, to put away our natural emotions? Fanny would say yes, and

would scorn her for her weakness, and cry out with horror at a second marriage. "And so would I have done," poor Mary thought, "if—if poor Tom had only been fond of me." And then the thought of Trevithic came to her as a person to speak to, a helper and adviser. He would speak the truth; he would not be afraid, Mary thought; and the secret remembrance that he was Hambledon's friend did not make her feel less confidence in his decisions.

CHAPTER VIII.

HASTY PUDDING AND BLOWS FROM A CLUB.

MRS. MYLES had been away some little time from her house at Sandsea, and from the self-imposed duties which were waiting undone until her return. Something of admiration for Trevithic's energy and enterprise made her think that very day of certain poor people she had left behind, and whom she had entirely forgotten. Before Fanny came home that evening, she sat down and wrote to her old friend, Miss Triquett, begging her to be so good as to go to Mrs. Gummers, and one or two more whose names, ages, troubles, and families were down upon her list, and distribute a small sum of money enclosed.

"I am not afraid of troubling you, dear Miss Triquett," wrote Mary Myles, in her big, picturesque handwriting. "I know your kind heart, and that you never grudge time nor fatigue when you can help any one out of the smallest trouble or the greatest. I have been seeing a good deal lately of Mr. Trevithic, who is of your way of thinking, and who has been giving himself an infinity of pains about some abuses in the workhouse here. He is, I do believe, one of the few people who could have come to the help of the poor creatures. He has so much courage and temper, such a bright and generous way of sympathizing and entering into other people's troubles, that I do not despair of his accomplishing this good work. My cousin and I feel very much with and for him. He looked ill and worn one day when I called upon him; but I am glad to think that coming to us has been some little change and comfort to him. He is quite alone, and we want him to look upon this place as his home while he is here. Your old acquaintance, Colonel Hambledon, has come down about this busi-

ness. It is most horrifying. Can you imagine the poor, sick people left with tipsy nurses, and more dreadful still, girls locked up in cellars by the cruel matron for days at a time? But this fact has just been made public.

"Goodness and enthusiasm like Mr. Trevithic's, seem all the more beautiful when one hears such terrible histories of wickedness and neglect; one needs an example like his in this life to raise one from the unprofitable and miserable concerns of every day, and to teach one to believe in nobler efforts than one's own selfish and aimless wanderings could ever lead to unassisted.

"Pray remember me very kindly to Miss Moineaux and to Mrs. Trevithic, and believe me, dear Miss Triquett,

"Very sincerely yours,

"MARY MYLES.

"Is Mrs. Trevithic again suffering from neuralgia? Why is not she able to be with her husband?"

"Why, indeed!" said Miss Moineaux, hearing this last sentence read out by Miss Triquett. This excellent spinster gave no answer. She read this letter twice through deliberately; then she tied her bonnet securely on, and trotted off to Gummers & Co. Then, having dispensed the bounties and accepted the thanks of the poor creatures, she determined to run the chance of finding Mrs. Trevithic at home. "It is my painful duty," said Triquett to herself, shaking her head—"my painful duty. Anne Trevithic should go to her husband; and I will tell her so. If I were Mr. Trevithic's wife, should I leave him to toll alone? No, I should not. Should I permit him to seek sympathy and consolation with another, more fascinating, perhaps? No, certainly not. And deeply grateful should I have felt to her who warned me on my fatal career; and surely my young friend Anne will be grateful to her old friend whose finger arrests her on the very edge of the dark precipice." Miss Triquett's reflections had risen to eloquence by the time she reached the rectory door. A vision of Anne clinging to her in tears, imploring her advice, of John shaking her warmly by the hand and murmuring, that to Miss Triquett they owed the renewed happiness of their home, beguiled the way. "Where is Mrs. Trevithic?" she asked the butler in her deepest voice. "Leave us," said Miss Triquett to the bewildered menial as he opened the drawing-room door and

she marched into the room; and then encountering Mrs. Trevithic, she suddenly clasped her in her well-meaning old arms.

"I have that to say to you," said Miss Triquett, in answer to Anne's amazed exclamation, "which I fear will give you pain; but, were I in your place, I should wish to hear the truth." The good old soul was in earnest; her voice trembled, and her little black curls shook with agitation.

"Pray do not hesitate to mention anything," said Mrs. Trevithic, surprised but calm, and sitting down and preparing to listen attentively. "I am sure anything you would like to have attended to —".

Miss Triquett at the invocation pulled out the letter from her pocket.

"Remember, only remember this," she said; "this comes from a young and attractive woman." And then in a clear and ringing voice she read out poor Mary's letter, with occasional unspeakable and penetrating looks at Anne's calm features.

Poor little letter! It had been written in the sincerity and innocence of Mary's heart. Any one more deeply read in such things might have wondered why Colonel Hambleton's name should have been brought into it; but as it was, it caused a poor jealous heart to beat with a force, a secret throb of sudden jealousy, that nearly choked Anna for an instant as she listened, and a faint pink tinge came rising up and coloring her face.

"Remember, she is *very* attractive," Miss Triquett re-echoed, folding up the page. "Ah! be warned, my dear young friend. Go to him; throw yourself into his arms; say, 'Dearest, darling husband, your little wife is by your side once more; I will be your comforter!' Do not hesitate." Poor old Triquett, completely carried away by the excitement of the moment, had started from her seat, and with extended arms had clasped an imaginary figure in the air. It was ludicrous, it was pathetic to see this poor old silly, meddlesome creature quivering, as her heart beat and bled for the fate of others. She had no tear or emotions of her own. It was absurd — was it not? — that she should care so deeply for things which could not affect her in the least degree. There was Anne, with her usual self-possession, calmly subduing her irritation. She did not smile; she did not frown; she did not seem to notice this momentary ebullition. To me it seems that, of the two, my sympathy is with Miss Triquett. Let us be absurd, by all means, if that is the price

which must be paid for something which is well worth its price.

Miss Triquett's eyes were full of tears. "I am impetuous, Mrs. Trevithic," she said. "My aunt has often found fault with me for it. Pray excuse me if I have interfered unwarrantably."

"Interference between married people rarely does any good, Miss Triquett," said Anne, standing up with an icy platitude, and unmistakably showing that she considered the visit at an end.

"Good-by," said poor Miss Triquett, wistfully. "Remember me most kindly to your papa."

"Certainly," said Mrs. Trevithic. "I am afraid you will have a disagreeable walk back in the rain, Miss Triquett. Good-evening. Pray give my compliments to Miss Molneaux."

The old maid trudged off alone into the mud and the rain, with a mortified sense of having behaved absurdly, disappointed and tired, and vaguely ashamed and crestfallen. The sound of the dinner-bell ringing at the rectory, as she trudged down the hill in the dark and dirt, did not add to her cheerfulness.

Anne, with flushed red cheeks and trembling hands, as Triquett left the room, sank down into her chair for a moment, and then, suddenly starting up, busied herself exactly as usual with her daily task of putting the drawing-room in order before she went up to dress. Miss Triquett's seat she pushed right away out of sight. She collected her father's writing-materials and newspapers, and put them straight. She then re-read her husband's last few lines. There was nothing to be gleaned from them. She replenished the flower-stands, and, suddenly remembering that it was Mrs. Myles who had given them to her, she seized one tall glass fabric and all but flung it angrily on the ground. But reflecting that if it were broken it would spoil the pair, she put it back again into its corner, and contented herself with stuffing in all the ugliest scraps of twigs, dead leaves and flowers from the refuse of her basket.

The rector and his daughter dined at half-past five; it was a whim of the old man's. Anne clutched Dulcie in her arms before she went down after dressing. The child had never seen her mamma so excited, and never remembered being kissed like that before by her. "D'oo lub me vely mush today, mamma?" said Dulcie, pathetically. "Is it toz I 'ave my new fock?"

Old Mr. Bellingham came in at the sound of the second bell, smiling as usual, and rubbing his comfortable little fat hands together; he did not remark that anything was amiss with his daughter, though he observed that there was not enough cayenne in the gravy of the veal cutlets, and that the cook had forgotten the necessary teaspoonful of sugar in the soup. For the first time since he could remember Anne failed to sympathize with his natural vexation, and seemed scarcely as annoyed as usual at the neglect which had been shown. Mr. Bellingham was vexed with her for her indifference; he always left the scolding to her; he liked everything to go smooth and comfortable, and he did not like to be called upon personally to lose his temper. "For what we have received"—and the butler retires with the crumbs and the cloths, and the little old gentleman—who has had a fire lighted; for the evenings are getting chilly—draws comfortably into his chimney-corner; while Anne, getting up from her place at the head of the table, says, abruptly, that she must go upstairs and see what Dulcie is about. A restless mood had come over her; something unlike anything she had ever felt before. Little Triquett's eloquence, which had not even seemed to disturb Anne at the time, had had full time to sink into this somewhat torpid apprehension, and excite Mrs. Trevithic's indignation. It was not the less fierce because it had smouldered so long.

"Insolent creature!" Anne said to herself, working herself up into a passion; "how dare she interfere? Insolent, ridiculous creature! 'Remember that that woman is attractive'— How dare she speak so to me? Oh, they are all in league,—in league against me!" cried poor Anne, with a moan, wringing her hands with all the twinkle of stones upon her slim white fingers. "John does not love me! he never loved me! He will not do as I wish, though he promised and swore at the altar he would. And she—she is spreading her wicked toils round him, and keeping him there, while I am here alone—all alone; and he leaves me exposed to the insolence of those horrible old maids. Papa eats his dinner, and only thinks of the flavor of the dishes, and Dulcie chatters to her doll and don't care, and no one comes when I ring," sobbed Mrs. Trevithic in a burst of tears, violently tugging at the bell-rope. "Oh, it is a shame, a shame!"

Only as she wiped away the tears a gleam

of determination came into Mrs. Trevithic's blue eyes, and the flush on her pale cheeks deepened. She had taken a resolution. This is what she would do,—this was her resolution: She would go and confront him there on the spot, and remind him of his duty,—he who was preaching to others. It was her right. And then—and then she would leave him forever, and never return to Sandsea to be scoffed at and jeered at by those horrible women, said Anne vaguely to herself as the door opened and the maid appeared. "Bring me a *Bradshaw*, Judson," said Mrs. Trevithic, very much in her usual tone of voice, and with a great effort recovering her equanimity. The storm had passed over, stirring the waters of this overgrown pool, breaking away the weeds which were growing so thickly on the stagnant surface, and rippling the slow shallows underneath. It seems a contradiction to write of this dull and unimpressionable woman now and then waking and experiencing some vague emotion and realization of experiences which had been slowly gathering and apparently unnoticed, for a long time before; but who does not count more than one contradiction among their experiences? It was not Anne's fault that she could not understand, feel quickly and keenly, respond to the calls which stronger and more generous natures might make upon her. Her tears flowed dull and slow long after the cause, unlike the quick, bright drops that would spring to Mary Myles' clear eyes, — Mary, whom the other woman hated with a natural, stupid, persistent hatred that nothing ever could change.

Judson, the maid, who was not deeply read in human nature, and who respected her mistress immensely as a model of decision, precision, and deliberate determination, was intensely amazed to hear that she was to pack up that night, and that Mrs. Trevithic would go to London that evening by the nine o'clock train.

"Send for a fly, directly, Judson, and dress Miss Dulcie."

"Dress Miss Dulcie?" Judson asked, bewildered.

"Yes, Miss Dulcie will come too," said Anne, in a way that left no remonstrance.

She did not own it to herself; but, by a strange and wayward turn of human nature, this woman—who was going to reproach her husband, to leave him forever, to cast herself adrift from him—took Dulcie with her; Dulcie, a secret defence, a bond and

strong link between them that she knew no storm or tempest would ever break.

Mr. Bellingham was too much astounded to make a single objection. He thought his daughter had taken leave of her senses when she came in and said good-by.

Poor thing, the storm raging in her heart was a fierce one. Gusts of passion and jealousy were straining and beating and tearing; "sails ripped, seams opening wide, and compass lost." Poor Anne, whose emotions were all the more ungovernable when they occasionally broke from the habitual restraint in which she held them, sat in her corner of the carriage, picturing to herself Trevithic enslaved, enchanted. If she could have seen the poor fellow adding up long lists of figures in his dreary little office, by the light of a smoking lamp, I think her jealousy might have been appeased.

All the way to town Anne sat silent in her corner; but if she deserved punishment, poor thing, she inflicted it then upon herself, and with an art and an unrelenting determination for which no other executioner would have found the courage.

They reached the station at last, with its lights and transient life and bustle. A porter called a cab. Dulcie and the maid and Mrs. Trevithic got in. They were to sleep at the house of an old lady, a sister of Mr. Bellingham's, who was away, as Anne knew, but whose house-keeper would admit them.

And then the journey began once more, across dark passages, winding thoroughfares, interminable in their lights and darkness, across dark places that may have been squares. The darkness changed and lengthened the endless road,—they had left Oxford Street, with its blazing shops; they had crossed the Park's blackness. The roll of the wheels was like the tune of some dismal night-march. The maid sat with Dulcie asleep in her arms, but presently Dulcie woke up with a shrill, piteous outcry. "I'se so ti'ed," she sobbed in the darkness, the coldness, the dull drip of the rain, the monotonous sound of the horse's feet striking on the mud. "I wan' my tea; I'se so ti'ed, wan' my little bed"—this was her piteous litany.

Anne was very gentle and decided with her, only once she burst out, "Oh, don't, don't, I cannot bear it, Dulcie."

Our lives often seem to answer strangely to our wishes. Is there some hidden power
 in our spirits work upon the sub-

stance of which our fate is built? Jack wished to fight. Assault him now, dire spirit of ill-will, of despondency, and that most cruel spirit of all called calumny. This tribe of giants are like the bottle-monsters of the Arabian Nights, intangible, fierce, sly, remorseless, springing up suddenly, mighty shadows coming in the night and striking their deadly blows. They raise their clubs (and these clubs are not trees torn from the forest, but are made from the forms of human beings massed together), and the clubs fall upon the victim, and he is crushed.

There was a brandy-and-water weekly meeting at Hammersley, called "Ours," every Thursday evening, to which many of the tradespeople were in the habit of resorting, and there discussing the politics of the place. Mr. Bulcox had long been a member, so was Pitchley the grocer, and Oker himself did not disdain to join the party; and as John was not there to contradict them, you may be sure these people told their own story. How it spread I cannot tell, but it is easy to imagine. One rumor after another to the hurt and disadvantage of poor Trevithic began to get about. Reformers are necessarily unpopular among a certain class. The blind and the maimed and the halt worshipped the ground Trevithic stood upon at first. "He was a man as would see to their rights," they said; "and if he had his way, would let them have their snuff and a drop of something comfortable. He had his crauds. These open windows gave 'em the rheumatics, and this sloppin' and washin' was all along of it, and for all the talk, there were some things but what they wouldn't deny was more snug in Bulcox's time than now; but he were a good creature for all that, Mr. Trevithic, and meant well, he did," etc., etc. Only when the snuff and the comfortable drop did not come as they expected, and the horrors of the past dynasty began to be a little forgotten,—at the end of a month or so of whitewashing and cleansing and reforming, the old folks began to grumble again much as usual. Trevithic could not take away their years and their aches and pains and wearinesses, and make the workhouse into a bower of roses, and the old people into lovely young lasses and gallant lads again.

He had done his best, but he could not work miracles.

It happened that a Lincolnshire doctor, writing from Downham to the "Jupiter" not long after, eloquently describing the

symptoms, the treatment, the means of prevention for this new sort of cholera, spoke of the devotion of some, and the curious indifference of others. "Will it be believed," he said, "that in some places, the clergyman has been known to abandon his flock at the first threat of danger, — a threat which in one especial case at F., not far from here, was not fulfilled, although the writer can testify from his own experience to the truth of the above statement?"

As far as poor Jack's interests were concerned, it would have been better for him if the cholera had broken out at Featherston; it would have brought him back to his own home. But Penfold recovered. Mrs. Hodge — the only other patient — died. Hodge married again immediately, and that was the end of it. "Ours" took in the "Jupiter;" somebody remembered that Downham and Featherston were both in the same neighborhood; some one else applied the story, and Bulcox and the gas-fitter between them, concocted a paragraph for the "Anvil," the great Hammersley organ; and so ill-will and rumor did their work, while Jack went his rounds in the wards of St. Magdalene's, looking sadder than the first day he had come, although the place was cleaner, the food warmer and better, the sick people better tended than ever before; for the guardians had been persuaded to let in certain deaconesses of the town, — good women, — who nursed for love, and did not steal the tea. But in the mean time, this odd cabal which had set in had risen and grown, and from every side Jack began to meet with cold looks and rebuffs. He had ill-used his wife, deserted her, they said; abandoned his parish from fear of infection. He had forged; he had been expelled from his living. There was nothing that poor Jack was not accused of by one person or another. One day when his friend Austin came in with the last number of the "Anvil," and showed him a very spiteful paragraph about himself, Jack only shrugged his shoulders. "We understand that the gentleman whose extraordinary revelations respecting the management of our workhouse have been met by some with more credence than might have been expected, considering the short time which had passed since he first came among us, is the rector alluded to in a recent letter to the 'Jupiter' from a medical man, who deserted his parish at the first alarm of cholera."

"Can this be true?" said Austin, gravely.

"Mrs. Hodge certainly died of the chole-

ra," Jack answered, "and Penfold was taken ill and recovered. Those are the only two cases in my parish."

A little later in the day, as the two young men were walking along the street, they met Mr. Oker puffing along the pavement. He stopped as usual to rub his hands, when he saw Trevithic.

"As your attention been called, sir," he said, "to a paragraph in the 'Anvil,' that your friends should contradict, if possible, sir? It's mos' distressin' when such things gets into the papers. They say at the club, that some of the guardians is about to ask for an account of the sick-fund money, sir, which, I believe, Mr. Skipper put into your 'ands, sir. For the present, this paragraft should be contradicted, if possible, sir."

Oker was an odious creature, insolent and civil; and, as he spoke, he gave a sly, spiteful glance into Jack's face. Trevithic was perfectly unmoved, and burst out laughing. "My good Mr. Oker," he said, "you will be sorry to hear that there is no foundation whatever in the paragraph. It is some silly, tittle-tattling tale, which does not affect me in the least. If any one is to blame, it is Mr. Skipper, the workhouse chaplain, who was then in my place. You can tell your friends at the club that they have hit the wrong man. Good-day." And the young fellow marched on his way with Mr. Austin, leaving Oker to recover as best he could.

"I'm afraid they will give you trouble yet," Austin said, — "King Stork though you are after that little Log of a Skipper."

When Jack appeared before the board on the next Wednesday, after the vote had been passed for dismissing the Bulcoxes, it seemed to him that one half of the room greeted his entrance with a scowl of ill-will and disgust; the other half with alarm and suspicion. No wonder. It was Jack's belief that some of the guardians were seriously implicated in the charges which had been brought against Bulcox; others were certainly so far concerned that the "Jupiter" had accused them of unaccountable neglect; and nobody likes to be shown up in a leader even for merely neglecting his duties.

All this while the workhouse had been in a commotion; the master and mistress were only temporarily fulfilling their duties until a new couple should have been appointed. The board, chiefly at the instance of Oker the gas-fitter, and Pitchley the retail grocer, did not press the charges brought against Mr. Bulcox; but they contented themselves

with dismissing him and his wife. It was not over-pleasant for Trevithic to meet them about the place, as he could not help doing occasionally; but there was no help for it, and he bore the disagreeables of the place as best he could, until Mr. and Mrs. Evans, the newly-appointed master and matron, made their appearance. The board was very civil, but it was anything but cordial to Trevithic. Jack, among other things, suspected that Pitchley himself supplied the bad tea and groceries which had been so much complained of, and had exchanged various bottles of port from the infirmary for others of a better quality, which were served at the master's own table. So the paupers told him.

Meanwhile the opposition had not been idle. It was Bulcox himself, I think, who had discovered that Jack, in administering the very limited funds at his disposal, had greatly neglected the precaution of tickets. One or two ill-conditioned people, whom Trevithic had refused to assist, had applied to the late master, and assured him that Trevithic was not properly dispensing the money at his command. One tipsy old woman in particular was very indignant; and, judging by her own experience, did not hesitate to accuse the chaplain of keeping what was not his own.

This credible witness in rags and battered wires stood before the chairman when Jack came in. It seems impossible that anybody should have seriously listened to a complaint so absurd and unlikely. But it must be remembered that many of the people present were already ill disposed, that some of them were weak, and others stupid, and they would not have been sorry to get out of their scrape by discovering Jack to be of their own flesh and blood.

Trevithic heard them without a word, mechanically buttoning up his coat, as he had a trick of doing, and then in a sudden indignation he tore it open, and from his breast-pocket he drew the small book in which he had made all his notes. "Here," said he, "are my accounts. They were made *hastily* at the time, but they are accurate, and you will see that I have paid every farthing away that was handed over to me by Mr. Skipper, and about twice the amount besides out of my own pocket. You can send for the people to whom I have paid the money, if you like." The little book went travelling about from one hand to another, while the remorseless Trevithic continued, "I now, in my turn, de-

mand that the ledgers of these gentlemen" — blazing round upon the retail grocer and Oker the gas-fitter — "be produced here immediately upon the spot, without any previous inspection, and that I, too, may have the satisfaction of clearing up my doubts as to their conduct." "That is fair enough," said one or two of the people present. "It's quite impossible, unheard of," said some of the others; but the majority of the guardians present were honest men, who were roused at last, and the ledgers were actually sent for.

I have no time here to explain the long course of fraud which these ledgers disclosed. The grocer was found to have been supplying the house, at an enormous percentage, with qualities differing in his book and in that of the master, who must again have levied a profit. The gas-fitter, too, turned out to be the contractor from a branch establishment, and to have also helped himself. This giant certainly fell dead upon the floor when he laid open his accounts before the board, for Hammersley workhouse is now one of the best managed in the whole kingdom.

CHAPTER IX.

JACK HELPS TO DISENCHANT THE BEAUTIFUL LADY.

FANNY GARNIER bustled home one afternoon, brimming over, good soul, with rheumatisms, chicken-poxes, and other horrors that were not horrors to her, or interjections, or lamentations; but new reasons for exertions, which were almost beyond her strength at times, — as now, when she said wearily, "that she must go back to her ward; some one was waiting for things that she had promised." She was tired, and Mary, half ashamed, could not help offering to go in her cousin's place. It seemed foolish to refrain from what she would have done yesterday in all simplicity, because there was a chance that Hambledon was there to-day, or Trevithic, who was Hambledon's friend, if not quite Hambledon himself, who talked to him and knew his mind, and could repeat his talk.

When Mary reached the infirm ward, where she was taking her jellies, and bird's-eye, and liquorice, her heart gave a little flutter, for she saw that two figures were standing by one of the beds. One was

Jack, who turned round to greet her as she came up with her basket on her arm. The other was Hambledon, who looked at her and then turned away. As for all the old women in their starched nightcaps, it was a moment of all-absorbing excitement to them,—sitting bolt upright on their beds, and bowing affably, as was the fashion in the infirm ward. It was quite worth while to be civil to the gentry, let alone manners; you never knew but what they might have a quarter of a pound of tea, or a screw of snuff in their pockets. “Law bless you, it was not such as them as denies themselves anythink they may fancy.” Such was the Hammersley creed.

As she came up, Mary made an effort, and in her most self-possessed and woman-of-the-worldest manner, put out her hand again and laughed, and exclaimed at this meeting. Her shyness, and the very effort she made to conceal it, gave her an artificial manner that chilled and repelled poor Hambledon as no shyness or hesitation would have done. “She’s no heart,” said the poor Colonel to himself. “She don’t remember. She would only laugh at me.” He forgot that Mary was not a child, not even a very young woman; that this armor of expediency had grown up naturally with years and with the strain of a solitary life. It is a sort of defence to which the poor little hedgehogs of women, such as Mary Myles, resort sometimes. It meant very little, but it frightened the Colonel away. Mrs. Myles heard him go as she bent over poor old Mrs. Crosspoint, and her heart gave a little ache, which was not entirely of sympathy for the poor old thing’s troubles.

However, Mary had a little talk with Trevithic in the dark as she crossed the courts and passages, and he walked beside her, which did her good, though she said nothing that any one who did not know would have construed into more than it seemed to mean.

She told him a little about her past life. She did not tell him that Colonel Hambledon had once asked her to come into his life; but Trevithic knew all that she wanted to say as he listened to the voice speaking in the dark,—the sweet, low voice with the music in it; a revelation came to him there in the archway of that narrow workhouse stone passage.

A revelation came to him, and that instant, as was his way, he acted upon it. “I think some people—” he began, and then he stopped. “I think you should secure a

friend,” he said quickly, in an odd voice. “You should marry,” and he faltered, as he made way for two poor women who limped past on their way to their corners in the great pigeon-holes case of human suffering. That little shake in his voice frightened Trevithic. What was it to him? How did Mary Myles’ fate concern him? He let her out at the great gate. He did not offer to walk back with her. The great iron bars closed with a clang, as she went away out into the dim world that was surging round about these prison walls. He would go back to Anne, Trevithic said to himself; even while the last grateful words were uttering in his ears, and the sweet, quick eyes still lighting up for him the dulness of the stony place. Mary Myles went back alone; and all that night Jack lay awake thinking, turning some things in his mind and avoiding others, wondering what he should say to Hambledon, what he should leave unsaid; for some nameless power had taught him to understand now, as he never had understood before, what was passing in other minds and hearts. A power too mighty for my poor Jack to encounter or hope to overcome in fight, a giant from whom the bravest can only turn away,—so gentle is he, so beautiful, so humble in his irresistible might, that though many might conquer him if they would, they will not, and that is the battle.

And I think this giant must have been that nameless one we read of in the story, whom Jack did not care to fight, but he locked him up and barred him in the castle, and bolted gates and kept him safe behind them; the giant who in return for this strange treatment gave Jack the sword of sharpness and the cap of knowledge. The sword pricked fiercely enough, the cap of knowledge weighed, ah, too heavily, but Jack, as we know, did not shrink from pain.

The imprisoned giant touched some kindly chord in Jack’s kind heart. Was he not Hambledon’s friend? Was he not a link between two people, very near and yet very far apart? Had Mary Myles’ kindness been quite disinterested? he asked himself, a little bitterly, before he spoke;—spoke a few words which made Charles Hambledon flush up and begin to tug at his mustache, and which decided Mary Myles’ fate as much as Anne Bellingham’s tears had decided Jack’s three years ago.

“Why don’t you try again?” Trevithic said. “I think there might be a chance for you.”

The Colonel did not answer, but went on pulling at his mustache. Trevithic was silent, too, and sighed. "I never saw any one like her," he said at last. "I think she carries a blessing wherever she goes. I, who am an old married man, may say so much,—mayn't I? I have seen some men go on their knees for gratitude for what others are scarcely willing to put out their hands to take."

Poor Jack! The cap of knowledge was heavy on his brow as he spoke. He did not look to see the effect of his words. What would he not have said to serve her? He walked away to the desk where he kept his notes and account-books, and took pen and paper, and began to write.

"It is a lucky thing for me that you are a married man," the Colonel said, with an uneasy laugh. "It's one's fate. They won't like the connexion at home. She don't care about it one way or another, for all you say; and yet I find myself here again and again. I have a great mind to go this very evening."

"I am writing to her now," Trevithic answered, rather incoherently, after a minute. "The ladies have promised to come with me to-morrow to see the rectory-house at St. Bigots. I shall call for them about twelve o'clock; and it will take us a quarter of an hour to walk there."

It was a bright autumn morning, glittering and brilliant. Jack stood waiting for Mrs. Myles and her cousin in the little wood at the foot of the garden-slope, just behind the lodge. A bird, with outstretched wings, fluttered from the ivy-bed at his feet, and went and perched upon the branch of a tree. All the noises of life came to him from the town, glistening between the gleam of the trees: the fall of the hammer from the wood-yard where the men were at work, and the call of the church-bell to prayer, and the distant crow of the farm-yard upon the far-off hill, and the whistle of the engine, starting and speeding through the quiet country valley to the junction in the town, where the great world's gangways met and diverged.

All this daily life was going on, and John Trevithic struck with his stick at a dead branch of a tree. Why was work, so simple and straightforward a business to some honest folks, so tangled and troubled and unsatisfactory to others? In daily life hand labor is simple enough. Old Peascud, down below in the kitchen-garden, turns over mother earth, throbbing with life and all

its mysteries, with what he calls a "perty shovel," and pats it down, and complacently thinks it is his own doing that the ivy slips cut off the branch which he has stuck into the ground are growing and striking out fresh roots.

Peascud is only a sort of shovel himself, destined to keep this one small acre, out of the square acres which cover the surface of the earth, in tolerable order, and he does it with a certain amount of spurring and pushing, and, when his day's work is over, hangs up comfortably on a nail and rests with an easy mind; but Jack, who feels himself a shovel, too, has no laws to guide him. Some of the grain he has sown has come up above the ground, it is true, but it is unsatisfactory after all; he does not know whether or not his slips are taking root,—one or two of them he has pulled up, like the children do, to see whether they are growing.

As Jack stands moralizing, crow cocks, ring bells, strike hammers. It was a fitting chorus, distant and cheerful, and suggestive to the sweet and brilliant life of the lady for whom he waits. Not silence, but the pleasant echoes of life should accompany her steps, the cheerful strains of summer, and the bright colors of spring. Trevithic saw everything brighten and lighten up by her presence, and thought it was so in fact, poor fellow. Sometimes in a foul ward, when the dull sights and sounds oppressed him almost beyond bearing, with a sudden breath of relief and happiness, the image of this charming and beautiful woman would pass before him, sweet and pure, and lovely and unsold, amidst lovely things, far away from these ghastly precincts. What had such as she to do with such as these? Heaven forbid that so fair a bird, with its tender song and glancing white plumage, should come to be choked and soiled and caged in the foul dungeons to which he felt called. John Trevithic, like many others, exaggerated, I think, to himself the beauty and the ugliness of the things he looked upon, as they appeared to others; not that things are not ten thousand times more beautiful, and more hideous, too, perhaps, than we have eyes to see, or hearts to realize; but they are not so as far as the eyes with which others see them are concerned. To this sweet and beautiful and graceful woman, the world was not so fair a place as to this care-worn man, with his haggard eyes and sad knowledge of life. He thought Mrs. Myles so far above him and beyond him in all things, that he

imagined that the pains of others must pain and strike her soft heart more cruelly even than himself,—that the loveliness of life was more necessary to her a thousand times than it could be to him.

Meanwhile all the little dried pine twigs were rustling and rippling, for she was coming down the little steep path, holding up her muslin skirts as she came, and stepping with her rapid, slender footsteps, stooping, and then looking up to smile. Mrs. Myles was always well dressed; there was a certain completeness and perfection of dainty smoothness and freshness about all her ways, which belonged to her dress and her life, and her very loves and dislikes. The soft flutter of her ribbons belong to her as completely as the pointed ends of old Peascud's Sunday shirt-collars, and the broad, stiff taper of his best waist-coat do to him, or as John Trevithic's fancies, as he stands in the fir-wood. Another minute, and she is there beside him, holding out her hand, and smiling with her sweet, still eyes, and the bird flutters away from its branch. "Fanny cannot come," she said. "We must go without her, Mr. Trevithic."

A something—I cannot tell you what—told Jack, as she spoke, that this was the last walk they would ever take together. It was one of those feelings we all know and all believe in at the bottom of our hearts. This something, coming I know not from whence, going I know not where, suddenly began to speak in the silent and empty chambers of poor Trevithic's heart, echoing mournfully, but with a warning in its echoes that he had never understood before. This something seemed to say, No, No, No. It was like a bell tolling, as they walked along the road. Jack led the way, and they turned off a high-road across a waste, through sudden streets springing up around them, across a bridge over a branch of the railway, into a broad black thoroughfare, which opened into the quiet street leading into Bolton Fields. The fields had long since turned to stones, and iron railings enclosing a church-yard, in the midst of which a church had been built. The houses all round the square were quaint red brick dwellings, with here and there a carved lintel to a doorway, and old stone steps, whitened and scrubbed by three or four generations of patient housemaids. The trees were bare behind the iron railing,—there was silence, though the streets beyond Bolton Fields were busy

like London streets. Trevithic stopped at the door of one of the largest of these dwellings. It had straight windows like the others, and broken stone steps upon which the sun was shining, and tall iron railings casting slant shadows on the pavement. It looked quaint and narrow, with its high rooms and blackened bricks, but it stood in sunshine. A child was peeping from one of the many-paned windows, and some birds were fluttering under the deep eaves of the roof.

Jack led the way into the dark-panelled entrance, and opened doors and windows, and ran upstairs. Mrs. Myles flitted here and there, suggested, approved of the quaint old house, with the sunny landings for Dulcie to play on, and the convenient cupboards for her elders, and quaint recesses, and the pleasant hints of an old world, more prosy and deliberate and less prosaic than to-day. There was a pretty little niche on the stairs, where Jack fancied Dulcie perching, and a window looking into the garden; there was a little wooden dining-room, and a study with the worn book-cases let into the walls. It was all in good order, for Trevithic had had it cleaned and scrubbed. The house was more cheerful than the garden at the back, where stone and weeds seemed to be flourishing unmolested.

"It is almost time to go," Mrs. Myles said, looking at her watch.

"You have not half seen the garden," said Trevithic. "Come this way." And Mary followed, wrapping her velvet cloak more closely round her slender shoulders.

They were standing in the little deserted garden of the house, for the garden was all damp, as gardens are which are rarely visited. The back of the house, less cheerful than the front, was close shuttered, except for the windows Trevithic had opened. Some dreary aloe-trees were sprouting their melancholy spikes, a clump of fir-trees and laurel-bushes was shuddering in one corner; a long grass-grown lawn, with rank weeds and shabby flower-beds, reached from the black windows to the stony paths, in which, in some unaccountable manner, as is usual in deserted places, the sand and gravel had grown into stones and lumps of earth and clay.

"This is very dreary," said Mrs. Myles, pulling her cloak still closer around her. "I like the house, but no one could be happy walking in this garden."

Trevithic smiled a little sadly. "I don't

know," he said. "I don't think happiness depends upon locality."

Poor fellow, his outward circumstances were so prosperous, his inner life so sad and untoward. No wonder that he undervalued external matters, and counted all lost that was not from within.

Mary Myles blushed, as she had a way of blushing when she was moved, and her voice failed into a low measured music of its own. "I envy you," she said. "You do not care like me for small things, and are above the influences of comfort and discomfort, of mere personal gratifications. It has been the curse of my life that I have never risen above anything, but have fallen shamefully before such easy temptations that I am ashamed even to recall them. I wonder what it is like," she said, with her bright, half-laughing, half-admiring smile, "to be, as you are, above small distractions, and able to fight real and great battles — and win them too?" she added, kindly and heartily.

A very faint mist came before Trevithic's eyes as Mary spoke, unconsciously encouraging him, unknowingly cheering him with words and appreciation — how precious she did not know, nor did he dare to tell himself.

"I am afraid what you describe is a sensation very few people know," said Trevithic. "We are all, I suspect, trying to make the best of our defeats; triumphant, if we are not utterly routed."

"And have you been routed at Feathers-ton?" Mrs. Myles asked.

"Completely," said Trevithic. "Anne will retreat with flying colors, but I am ignobly defeated, and only too thankful to run away and come and live here — in this very house perhaps — if she will consent to it."

"Anne is a happy woman to have any one to want her," said Mrs. Myles, coming back to her own thoughts with a sigh; "people love me, but nobody wants me."

"Here is a friend of yours, I think," said Jack, very quickly, in an odd sort of voice; for as he spoke he saw Hambledon coming in from the passage-door. Mrs. Myles saw him too, and guessed in an instant why Trevithic had detained her. Now in her turn she tried to hold him back.

"Do you believe in explanations, Mr. Trevithic?" said Mary, still strangely excited and beginning to tremble.

"I believe in a grateful heart, and in love and humility, and in happiness when it

comes across our way," said Jack, with kind, sad eyes, looking admiringly at the sweet and appealing face.

Mary was transformed. She had laid aside all her gentle pride and self-contained sadness; she looked as she must have looked long ago, when she was a girl, humble, imploring, confused; and though her looks seemed to pray him to remain, Trevithic turned away abruptly, and he went to meet Hambledon, who was coming shyly along the weedy path, a tall and prosperous-looking figure in the sunshine and desolation. "You are late," Trevithic said, with a kind, odd smile; "I had given you up." And then he left them and went into the house.

As Jack waited, talking to the house-keeper meanwhile, he had no great courage to ask himself many questions; to look behind; to realize very plainly what had happened; to picture to himself what might have been had fate willed it otherwise. He prayed an honest prayer. "Heaven bless them," he said in his heart, as he turned his steps away and left them together. He waited now patiently, walking in and out of the bare rooms, where people had once lived and waited too, who were gone with their anxious hearts, and their hopes, and their hopeless loves, and their defeats, to live in other houses and mansions which are built elsewhere. Was it all defeat for him? — not all. Had he not unconsciously wronged poor Anne, and given her just cause for resentment; and was anything too late while hope and life remained? If he could not give to his wife a heart's best love and devotion — if she herself had forbidden this — he could give her friendship, and in time the gentle ties of long use and common interest, and Dulcie's dear little arms might draw them closer together; so Jack thought in this softened mood.

John had waited a long time pacing up and down the empty rooms with the faded wire bookcases for furniture, and the melancholy pegs and hooks and wooden slabs which people leave behind them in the houses they abandon. Nearly an hour had passed and the two there out in the garden were talking still by the laurel-bushes. What was he waiting for? he asked himself presently. Had they not forgotten his very existence? There was work to be done — he had better go. What had he waited for so long? What indeed, poor fellow? He had been longing for a word;

one sign. He only wanted to be remembered: with that strange selfish longing which pities the poor familiar self, he longed for some word of kindness and sign of recognition from the two who had forgotten that anywhere besides in all the world there were hearts that loved or longed or forgot. John trudged away patiently as soon as he had suddenly made clear to himself that it was time to go. He knew the road well enough by this time, and cut off side turnings and came into the town — black and faded even in this brilliant sunshine that was calling the people out of their houses, opening wide windows, drying the rags of clothes, brightening the weary faces. The children clustered round the lamp-posts chattering and playing. One or two people said good-morning to him as he passed, who would have stared sulkily in a fog; the horses in the road seemed to prick their ears, and the fly from the station, instead of crawling wearily along, actually passed him at a trot. Jack turned to look after it; a foolish likeness had struck him. It was but for an instant, and he forgot as he reached the heavy door of the workhouse.

The porter was out, and the old pauper who let Jack in began some story to which he scarcely listened. He was full of the thought of those two there in the garden,—happy! ah, how happy in each other's companionship!—while he, deserted, lonely, discontented, might scarcely own to himself, without sin, that his home was a desolate one; that his wife was no wife, as he felt it; that life had no such prospects of love, solace, and sympathy for him, as for some of the most forlorn of the creatures under his care. It was an ill frame of mind coming so quickly after a good one,—good work done, and peacemaking, and a good fight won; but the very giant he had conquered with pain and struggle, had given him the cap of knowledge, and it pressed and ached upon his brow, and set its mark there. Trevithic put his hand to his forehead wearily, as he walked along the dull paved courts, and passed through one barred iron door after another. Most of the old folks were sunning themselves upon the benches, and the women were standing gossiping in the galleries of the house. There are stone galleries at Hammersley, from which the clothes are hung. So he came in here, opening one last iron gate to his office on the ground-floor, at the farther extremity of the great building. It was not very

far from the children's wards, and on these fine mornings the little creatures, with their quaint mobcaps and straight bonnets, came scrambling down the flight of steps into the yards. The very young ones would play about a little bo-peep behind an iron grating, or clinging to the skirts of one of the limp figures that were wearily lagging about the place. But the children did not very long keep up their little baby frolics; sad-faced little paupers in striped blue dresses would stand staring at Trevithic, with dark eyes gleaming in such world-weighed little faces, that his kind heart ached for them. His favorite dream for them was a children's holiday. It would almost seem that they had guessed his good intentions towards them to-day; a little stream was setting in in the direction of his office; a small group stood watching not far off. It made way before him, and disappeared, and then, as he came near, he saw that the door was open. A little baby pauper was sitting on the hinge and staring in; two other children had crept up to the very threshold, a third had slipped its fingers into the hinge and was peeping through the chink; and then, at the sound of his tired footsteps falling wearily on the pavement, there came a little cry of "Daddy, daddy!" The sweet little voice he loved best in the world seemed to fill the room, and Dulcie, his own little Dulcie, came to the door in the sunlight, and clasped him round the knees.

Trevithic, with these little arms to hold him safe, felt as if his complaints had been almost impious. In one minute, indeed, he had forgotten them altogether, and life still had something for him to love and to cling to. The nurse explained matters a little to the bewildered chaplain. Nothing had happened that she knew of. Mrs. Trevithic was gone to look for him. She had driven to Mrs. Myles' straight in the fly from the railway. She had left Miss Dulcie and her there to wait. She had left no message. Mrs. Trevithic had seemed put out like, said the nurse, and had made up her mind all of a sudden. They had slept in London at missis's aunt's. Trevithic was utterly bewildered.

In the mean time it was clear that something must be done for Dulcie, who was getting hungry now that her first little rapture was over (for raptures are hungry work). After some little demur, Trevithic told the girl to put on Dulcie's cloak again.

While John is talking to Dulcie in his little office, Anne had driven up to the door

of the rectory and crossed the threshold of her husband's house. "I want to speak to lady and gentleman," she said to the woman who let her in. And the house-keeper pointed to the garden, and told her she would find them there. Anne, the stupid, commonplace woman, was shivering with passion and emotion as she passed through the empty rooms. A few letters were lying on the chimney that John had torn open; the window-shutter was flapping, the wood creaked under her fierce, angry footsteps. There, at the end of the path, under the holly, stood Mary Myles, and suddenly an angry, fevered hand clutched her arm, and a fierce, flushed face confronted her. "Where is my husband?" hissed Anne. "You did not think that I should come. . . . How dare you take him from me?"

Colonel Hambledon, who had only gone away for a step or two, came back, hearing a voice, with Mary's glove, which she had left on the broken seat where they had been sitting. "What is this?" said he.

"Where is he?" cried the foolish, stupid woman, bursting into tears. "I knew I should find him here with her."

"He has been gone some time, poor fellow," said the Colonel, with a look of repugnance and dislike that Anne saw and never forgot. "Mrs. Trevithic, why do you think such bad thoughts?"

While Mary Myles, indignant in her turn, cried, "Oh, for shame, for shame, Anne Trevithic! You are unkind yourself, and do you dare to be jealous of others? You, who have the best and kindest husband any woman ever had." Mary, as she spoke, clung with both hands to Hambledon's arm, trembling, too, and almost crying. The Colonel, in his happiness, could hardly understand that any one else should be unhappy on such a day. While he was comforting Mary, and entreating her not to mind what that woman had said, Anne, overpowered with shame, conscience-smitten, fled away down the path and through the house, — "deadly pale, like a ghost," said the housekeeper, afterwards, — and drove straight to the workhouse, where she had left her child. As she came to the great door, it opened with a dull sound, and her husband came out carrying little Dulcie in his arms.

"O John! I have been looking for you everywhere," she said, with a little cry, as with a revulsion of feeling she ran up to him, with outstretched hands. "Where

have you been? Mrs. Myles did not know, and I came back for Dulcie. We shall miss the train. Oh, where am I to go?"

Mrs. Trevithic, nervous, fluttered, bewildered, for perhaps the second time in her life, seemed scarcely to know what she was saying; she held up her cheek to be kissed; she looked about quite scared.

"What do you mean by the train, Anne?" her husband said. "Dulcie wants something to eat. Get into the carriage again."

It is difficult to believe — Trevithic himself could not understand it — Anne obeyed without a word. He asked no questions when she burst out with an incoherent "O John, they were so strange and unkind!" and then began to cry and cry and tremble from head to foot.

It was not till they got to the hotel that Mrs. Trevithic regained her usual composure, and ordered some rooms and lunch off the carte for the whole party. Trevithic never asked what had happened, though he guessed well enough, and when Hambledon told him afterwards that Mrs. Trevithic had burst in upon them in the garden, it was no news to poor John.

They had finished their dinner on the ground-floor room of the quiet old inn. Little Dulcie was perched at the window watching the people as they crossed and recrossed the wire-blind. A distant church clock struck some quarters, the sound came down the street, and Trevithic pulled out his watch with a smile, saying, "I think you will be too late for your train, Anne, today." Anne's heart gave a throb as he spoke. She always thought people in earnest, and she looked up wistfully and tried to speak; but the words somehow stuck in her throat. Meanwhile Trevithic jumped up in a sudden fuster. It was later than he imagined. He had his afternoon service at the workhouse to attend to. It was Friday, and he must go. He had not a moment to lose, so he told his wife in a word as he seized his hat, and set off as hard as he could go. He had not even a moment to respond to little Dulcie's signals of affection, and waves and capers behind the wire-blind.

Anne, who had been in a curious maze all this time, sitting in her place at the table and watching him, and scarcely realizing the relief of his presence as he busied himself in the old way for her comfort and Dulcie's, carving the chicken and waiting on them both, understood all at once how great the comfort of his presence had been. In her dull, sleepy way, she had been bask-

ing in sunshine for the last two hours, after the storm of the night before. She had untied her bonnet, and thrown it down upon a chair, and forgotten to smooth her sleek hair; her collar and ribbons were awry; her very face had lost its usual placidity,—it was altered and disturbed, and yet Jack thought he had never liked her looks so well, though he had never seen her so ruffled and self-forgetful in all the course of his married life.

For the moment Mrs. Trevithic was strangely happy in this odd reunion. She had almost forgotten at the instant the morning's jealous and mad expedition—Colonel Hambleton's look of scorn and Mary Myles' words—in this new unknown happiness. It seemed to her that she had never in her life before realized what the comfort might be of some one to love, to hold, to live for. She watched the quick clever hands dispensing the food for which, to tell the truth, she had no very great appetite, though she took all that her husband gave her. Had some scales fallen from her pale wondering eyes? As he left the room she asked herself, in her stupid way, what he had meant. Was this one little glimpse of home the last that she would ever know? Was it all over, all over? Anne tied her bonnet on again, and telling the maid to take care of little Dulcie, went out into the street again and walked off in the direction of the chapel. She had a sudden wish to be there. She did not know that they would admit her; but no difficulties were made, and she passed under the big arch. Some one pointed out the way, and she pushed open a green baize door and went in; and so Anne knelt in the bare little temple where the paupers' prayers were offered up,—humble prayers and whitewash that answer their purpose as well perhaps as Gothic, and iron castings, and flamboyant windows, and the beautiful clear notes of the choristers answering each other and bursting into triumphal utterance. The paupers were praying for their daily bread, hard and dry and butterless; for forgiveness for trespasses grosser and blacker perhaps than ours; for deliverance from evil of which Anne and others besides never realized; and ending with words of praise and adoration which we all use in truth, but which mean far, far more when uttered from that darkness upon which the divine light beams most splendidly. Anne for the first time in her life was kneeling a pauper in spirit, ashamed, and touched, and repentant.

There was no sermon, and Mrs. Trevithic got up from her knees and came away with her fellow-petitioners and waited in the court-yard for John. The afternoon sun of this long, eventful day was shining on the stones and casting the shadows of the bars and bolts, and brightening sad faces of the old men and women, and the happy faces of two people who had also attended the service, and who now advanced arm in arm to where Anne was standing. She started back as she first saw them: they had been behind her in the chapel, and she had not known that they were there.

The sight of the two had brought back with it all the old feeling of hatred, and shame, and mistrust; all the good that was in her seemed to shrink and shrivel away for an instant at their approach, and at the same time came a pang of envious longing. They seemed so happy together; so one, as, with a glance at one another, they both came forward. Was she all alone when others were happy? Had she not of her own doing put her husband away from her, and only come to him to reproach and leave him again? For a woman of such obstinacy and limited perception as Mrs. Trevithic to have settled that a thing was to be, was reason enough for it to happen; only a longing, passionate longing, came, that it might be otherwise than she had settled,—that she might be allowed to stay; and a rush of the better feelings that had overcome her of late kept her there waiting to speak to these two who had scorned her.

"I want to ask you to forgive me," said Mary, blushing, "anything I may have said. Your husband has done us both such service, that I can't help asking you for his sake to forget my hastiness."

"You see we were taken aback," said the Colonel, not unkindly. "Shake hands, please, Mrs. Trevithic, in token that you forgive us, and wish us joy. I assure you we are heartily sorry if we pained you." Anne flushed and flushed and didn't speak, but put out her hand, — not without an effort. "Are you going back directly, or are you going to stay with your husband?" said the Colonel, shaking her heartily by the hand.

Poor Anne looked up, scared, and shrank back once more; she could not bear to tell them that she did not know. She turned away all hurt and frightened, looking about for some means of escape, and then at that moment she saw that John was coming up to them across the yard from the office where he had gone to leave his surplice.

"O John," she said, still bewildered, and going to meet him, and with a piteous face, "here are Colonel Hambleton and Mary."

"We have come to ask for your congratulations," the Colonel said, laughing and looking very happy; "and to tell you that your match-making has been successful."

Mary Myles did not speak, but put out her hand to Trevithic.

Mrs. Trevithic meanwhile stood waiting her sentence. How new the old accustomed situations seem as they occur again and again in the course of our lives! Waters of sorrow overwhelm in their depths, as do the clear streams of tranquil happiness, both rising from distant sources, and flowing on either side of our paths. As I have said, the sight of these two, in their confidence and sympathy, filled poor Anne's heart with a longing that she had never known before. Mary Myles, I think, guessed what was passing in the other's mind,—women feel one another's passing emotions,—but the good Colonel was utterly unconscious.

"We have been asking your wife if she remains with you, or if she is going back directly," said he. "I thought perhaps you would both come and dine with us before we go."

There was a mist before Anne's eyes, an unspeakable peace in her heart, as Jack drew her hand through his arm, and said, in his kind voice, "Of course she stays; I am not going to let my belongings go away again, now that I have got them here."

As they were walking back to the inn together, Anne told her husband of her morning's work, and John sighed as he listened.

"We have both something to forgive," he said once more, looking at her with his kind, speaking eyes.

Anne winced, and looked away, and then her heart turned again, and she spoke and said, with real sensibility,—

"I have nothing to forgive, John. I thought you were in the wrong, but it was I from the beginning."

After a little time Trevithic and Anne and Dulcie went to live together in the old house in Bolton Fields. The woman was humbled, and did her best to make her husband's home happy, and John, too, remembered the past, and loved his wife, with all her faults, and did not ask too much of her, and kept clear, as best he could, of possible struggles and difficulties. His life was hard, but blows and fatigue he did not grudge, so

long as he could help to deliver the land. Foul caverns were cleansed, ignorant monsters were routed, dark things were made light. He was not content in his parish to drive away evil; he tried his best and strove to change it, and make it into good. These tangible dragons and giants were hard to fight, but once attacked they generally succumbed in the end, and lost perhaps one head or a claw in each successive encounter, and then other champions rose up, and by degrees the monster began to fall and dwindle away. But poor Trevithic's work is not over. Another giant is coming to meet him through the darkness. He is no hideous monster of evil like the rest; his face is pitiless, but his eyes are clear and calm. His still voice says, "Hold," and then it swells by degrees, and deafens all other sound. "I am the spirit of truth, men call me evil because I come out of the darkness," the giant cries; "but see my works are good as well as bad! See what bigotry, what narrow prejudice, what cruelty and wickedness and intolerance I have attacked and put to rout!" In the story-book it is Jack who is the conqueror; he saws through the bridge by which the giant approaches, and the giant falls into the moat and is drowned. But, as far as I can see, the Jacks of this day would rather make a way for him than shut him out; some of the heroes who have tried to saw away the bridge have fallen into the moat with their enemy, and others are making but a weak defence, and in their hearts would be glad to admit him into the palace of the King.

Mrs. Trevithic rarely goes into the garden at the back of her house. The other day, being vexed with her husband about some trifling matter, she followed him out to remonstrate. He was standing with Dulcie by the prickly holly-tree that she remembered so well, and, seeing her coming, he put out his hand with a smile. The words of reproach died away on Anne's lips, and two bright spots came into her cheeks, as with a very rare display of feeling she suddenly stooped and kissed the hand that held hers.

As I finish the story of Jack Trevithic, which, from the play in which it began, has turned to earnest, H. looks up from her knitting, and says that it is very unsatisfactory, and that she is getting tired of calling everything by a different name; and she thinks she would like to go back to the

realities of life again. In my dream-world my mate: an organ is playing a dismal
they have been forgotten, for the fire is tame; a carriage is rolling over the streets;
nearly out and the gray morn is spreading; so I ring the bell for the lamp and the reels,
along the streets. It is too dark to write; and Susan comes in to shut the shutters.

THE END.

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